



barrenness of agricultural fields, shrinkage of pastures and weakening of river flows and caused shortage of food, feed, and water, respectively. In addition, difference of interests that emerge together with modernization and associated allocation of water and land for new development directions has initiated conflicts as it discourages benefits, traditions, beliefs and culture of other parties or indigenous communities. Another impediment of peace is the growing need of people for luxurious living (investing for accessories far from basic needs even in poor countries) and hoarding wealth as a means of securing prestige, power and recognition through corruption or unfair way. Furthermore, the way of handling the emerged and emerging conflicts also requires clearly understanding the motive behind, and selecting appropriate approach that can satisfy or appease the actors.

This reflection emphasizes on conflicts that emanate in relation to natural resource use by taking watersheds and water as central issues, and forwards workable approaches help to reduce the prevalence of conflicts based on field level experiences learnt in Ethiopia.

2. WATERSHEDS AS SOURCE OF WATER AND CONFLICTS

The highlands/mountains of Ethiopia have been feeding millions of people for millennia both onsite and offsite. They are source of more than eight major river basins that provide freshwater to the inhabitants and users in the downstream within the country, and some of them offer trans-boundary benefits to neighboring countries. Through time, the mountains are losing their vigor to feed millions. They have lost their fertile soil, crop production potential and genetic diversity due to inefficient land management. Water storing ecosystems such as forests, wetlands and other vegetation types have been cleared and replaced by crop fields long ago. Population of the general area (both on the mountains and downstream areas) is almost tripled within the last few decades. As a result of the emerging new development directions and growing human needs; demand for water and other natural resources, food and other basic necessities is accelerated in the surrounding. In addition, lack of capacity for alternative source of livelihood resulted in increased dependence of people on natural resources. Climatic disturbance is worsening the situation in its part. Rainfall fluctuation and temperature rise resulted in further weakening of the source of the rivers and causing shortage of water and food, and worsening poverty.

failure are high in these watersheds and exposes poor farmers to complicated problems (starvation, migration, unrest, epidemics, etc). These complications compelled the impoverished and food insecure people to look for options such as migration in to urban areas and into other localities, which have relatively better natural resources base (forests and water). The migration is also associated with conflicts that emerge between the migrants and the locals, as well as results in further degradation of natural resources or ecosystems. As a result the potential of water sources is further degraded and shortage of water intensified. Other alternatives being practiced are using alternatives such as rainwater harvesting and stream based irrigation to reduce risks of crop failure. However, due to the degradation of water sources and climatic impacts on the streams, the efforts become susceptible to conflict of benefit sharing.

This situation is highly interrelated with watershed health and calls for integrated actions to improve ecosystem integrity and functions, water resource use efficiency, socioeconomic alternatives and harmonizing competing interests at all levels of uses and users. Therefore, it required looking for appropriate approaches that help improve environmental wellbeing and benefits of communities, and thereby calm potential conflicts of water use.

3. DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AND SCENARIOS IN RIVER BASINS

The following basins of Ethiopia are among very important basins in terms of socioeconomic, political and environmental well being of the country as well as the region and the world as well, if we accept the fact that environment/water/ connects continents at least by winter migratory birds and global warming. The basins are also highly populated areas and affected by land degradation and climatic problems such as drought and desertification. There is also growing demand for water and land in these areas together with the increasing population and development interventions. New economic development directions such as water intensive agribusiness activities, conversion of land use, introduction of new plant

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plots in to forest and wetland areas to convert them in to new farmlands is decreasing. Productivity increased per hectare of farmlands which are enriched with compost, and the target communities are now harvesting adequate yield. Wetlands are freed from siltation, free grazing and cultivation in Metu area (e.g. the revived Wichi wetland). Other activities such as creating livelihood opportunity through microcredit (for women groups), promoting honey production and agro-forestry (fodder and fuel trees, fruit, vegetable, coffee) and introducing fuel saving stoves helped to reduce the pressure on the remnant ecosystems (forests and wetlands). Water and sanitation and family planning activities have their own contribution in improving health and limiting family size, respectively. Moreover, capacitating women, sensitizing decision makers and building the skill of youth are among vital activities laying the foundation for future wellbeing of the environment and creating healthy and secured community. These activities are in progress under community ownership and with promising results that help strengthen the resource base and thereby block potential resource use conflicts, which may arise from shortages. Joining hands and mobilizing resources to scale up best practices will help create a healthy and secured community.

5. CONCLUSION

All humans belong to one species, *Homo sapience*; thus individuals or communities of poor and rich nations have similar needs that emanates from their nature or biology. They require basic needs such as food, water, shelter, peace, health, happy living, and are very keen to create comfortable situation for their offspring and exercise their beliefs, traditions and culture and all other beloved things without influence; freely. Interventions which affect this freedom initiate dislike and conflict. The biosphere unifies the *Homo sapience* by undermining barriers such as political boundaries, and globalization aspires for the same too. The biosphere encourages the evolution and existence of diversity and respects self identity. Could globalization be a means of creating devoted world citizenship where fair and equitable sharing of benefits is flourishing and creating healthy people whose identities are maintained in a healthy and peaceful environment?

Broadly thinking, people as a whole and those who share a given river basin /water/ in particular are very close as one family (brothers and sisters). However, lack of altruism and farsightedness have been aggravating destructive conflicts. With respect to water management, the health and wellbeing of the downstream is tied up with the wellbeing of the upstream. In majority, this truth is either not adequately

