

GAP: A Grand Design for Sustainable Development

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The Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP, in Turkish acronym) is a regional development project aimed at full-fledged socio-economic development of the Upper Mesopotamia, or the "Fertile Crescent," home to some of the earliest civilizations in the eastern Mediterranean. The Project area lies in southeastern Turkey, covering nine provinces corresponding to approximately 10% of Turkey's population and an equivalent surface area. The recognition of the great water potential of the Euphrates-Tigris river system in Turkey led to drawing up plans for its sustainable development for irrigation and hydropower generation and to control floods and droughts.

The GAP, in its historical context, was formulated as a package of water and land resource development project in the 1970s, which was later on transformed in the early 1980s to a multi-sectoral, socioeconomic regional development programme, and then into a sustainable human development project in the 1990s. The basic objectives of the GAP are to remove interregional disparities in the country by alleviating conditions of abject poverty, and to raise the income levels and living standards in the region.

The water resources development programme of the GAP includes 13 groups of irrigation and energy projects, seven of which are on the Euphrates river and six on the Tigris river. Within

the scope of these 13 projects, 27 billion kWh of hydroelectric energy is estimated to be generated annually with 7,500 MW installed capacity. In order to utilize the available water resources, the GAP envisages the construction of 22 storage dams and 19 hydro-power plants, of which 9 dams are completed and 7 hydro-power plants are in operation. The Project includes irrigation networks on the Euphrates-Tigris river basin to irrigate 1.82 million hectares of land, of which 231,915 hectares are in operation. The level of realization of energy projects is 75% and that of irrigation projects is 13%. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$32 billion, 16 billion of which have already been invested. The cumulative energy produced by the dams in the region reached 234 million kWh as of the end of 2005. The monetary equivalent of this energy is \$14 billion. The GAP scheme has already had a considerable impact on overall hydropower generation in Turkey with its 45% share.

Challenges & Potential in the GAP Region

Compared with the rest of Turkey, the GAP region has had a higher population growth, fertility and infant mortality rates, and lower life expectancy at birth than the national average. Tribal structure has been the dominant type of organization for centuries in the region. The region is well below country averages in terms of the number of schools and of student/teacher and student/class room ratios. Water for drinking and other purposes is not available in sufficient quantities. It is

also not purified or chlorinated in many urban settlements. Around 28% of the village population lacks drinking water, and 12% have drinking water only in limited quantities.

In spite of these bottlenecks, the region has a potential in terms of water, land and human resources. The majority of the region lies in the Euphrates-Tigris river system, which represents over 28% of the nation's water supply by rivers, and economically irrigable areas in the region make up 20% of those for the whole country. The distinguishing feature of human resources is the proportion of the young population. Approximately 77% of the population is under the age of 35 in the year 2005.

Major Components of the GAP

In accordance with the GAP's sustainable development approach, special programmes and projects have been initiated to emphasize the human dimension of development through project implementations concerned with the basic social services (education, health, housing) gender equality, urban management, irrigation facilities and environmental sustainability, institutional and community capacity-building, and public participation. These projects have been initiated by the GAP Regional Development Administration, established under the Turkish Prime Ministry in 1989 to coordinate the development-related activities in the GAP region in close cooperation and partnership with the other concerned government institutions, local governments, municipalities, civil society organizations, private corpora-

- Regulation of water in irrigation canals and determination of water saving irrigation methods.
- Management, operation & maintenance of irrigation systems.
- Reuse of irrigation return water.
- Income Generating Activities in Areas out of the Coverage of Irrigation.
- Land consolidation and extension activities.
- Agricultural commodities marketing survey and planning of crop patterns.
- Participatory resettlement and sustainable development as a result of reservoirs.
- Participatory Regional Development Plan.
- Multipurpose Community Centres.
- Project for the Rehabilitation of Children Working in the Streets.
- Social Progress for Youth.
- Back to Village and Central Village Rural Development Project.
- GAP Region Public Health Project.
- Project for the Promotion of Employment and Business Potential in the Urban Informal Sector.
- Entrepreneur Support and Guidance Centres.
- GAP Biodiversity Research Project.
- Studies on the Present and Prospective Climatic Features of Region.
- Environmental Education Project.
- Research, Excavation and Rescue Works in the Town of Hasankeyf.
- Zeugma 2000 Archeological Project.

tions, international institutions and funding agencies. A sample list of the projects which the GAP Administration has led since the early 1990s is displayed in Table 9.

The GAP Master Plan (1989) outlined the framework of the regional development, set a timetable for the development of water and soil resources in particular by taking into account the financial and technical capabilities, and determined the development and employment to be created by this transformation. Projections of the Master Plan could not be realized largely because of the public financing crisis, which deepened in the 1990s, and because of the terror incidents. Although the Master Plan envisaged a growth rate of 6.8% in the Gross Regional Product and a radical transformation of the economic structure, the growth rate could be realized only at 4.9% in 2005 as industry and services could not develop at the projected rates. In 2005 there had been concerted efforts to attract more investment into the region to take part solidly in the commercial activities of the eastern Mediterranean. Hence, in early January 2006, the GAP Administration proclaimed the year 2006 to be the 'Investment Year in the GAP.'

The GAP in 2005: An Overview

The 1st GAP Business and Investment Forum

The GAP region offers dynamic population structure; vast capacity for agricultural production; tourism potential; rapidly expanding markets; proximity to other markets in the Middle East; and state incentives provided to investments in the region. In spite of this favorable environment, investments in the region are still insufficient mainly due to technical, financial and managerial constraints of potential investors. Hence, "The First GAP Business and Investment Forum" which took place on 14th May 2005 at Sanliurfa Harran University focused on these constraints to come up with solutions relevant to all entrepreneurs. Approximately 750 firms and businessmen have participated in the Forum from textile, food, tourism, machine manufacturing, construction and other sectors.

The 1st Middle East Economic Cooperation Forum

Within the framework of the "Strategy for Promoting Trade with Neighbouring and Other Countries in the Region"

launched in 2000, the Turkish Undersecretary of Foreign Trade took steps to improve the trade with the countries of the region and significant progress has been achieved since then. In spite of this progress, however, it is not possible to say that the trade potential between Turkey and other countries of the region has been fully realised. As a matter of fact, the volume of Turkey's foreign trade with the countries of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East remained at \$6.7 billion for the first 5 months of 2005.

In this context, both with its geographical location and its economic potential, southeastern Anatolia is well positioned to contribute to the further development of Turkey's trade with the countries of the region. To be more specific, the GAP region stands as a potential supplier especially in the sectors of machinery-equipment, food and textiles and, furthermore, it may well serve as a bridge for those Middle Eastern companies seeking markets both in Turkey and in other European countries.

The 1st Middle East Economic Cooperation Forum took place on 2nd October 2005 under the joint organization of the GAP Regional Development Administration and the Diyarbakir Cham-

ber of Industry and Commerce. Participants in the Forum included businessmen from Turkey and other countries in the region, as well as guest speakers from Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq. 106 out of 218 participants have attended the Forum from Middle Eastern Countries (Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Syria), 88 from the GAP region and 24 from outside the region.

Young Turkish Businessmen Living in Europe Meet Businessmen from the GAP Region

With the supportive contributions of the Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade, the GAP Administration and the Young Businessmen Association of Turkey (TU-GIAD) jointly organized the meeting

“GAP Reunion of Young Businessmen Living in Europe” in Gaziantep on 26th November 2005. The Forum brought together deputies from the provinces of the region, leading figures in the financial sector and representatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations. The meeting was organized in line with several objectives including the assessment of investment opportunities for the transfer of the experience and funds of the businessmen to the GAP region, informing businessmen abroad about the economic potential of the region and consolidating cooperation with businessmen abroad and others who are active in the country. The organization covered about 300 young businessmen active in various countries in the EU as well as

200 others from the region and other parts of the country.

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