

NILE BASIN INITIATIVE



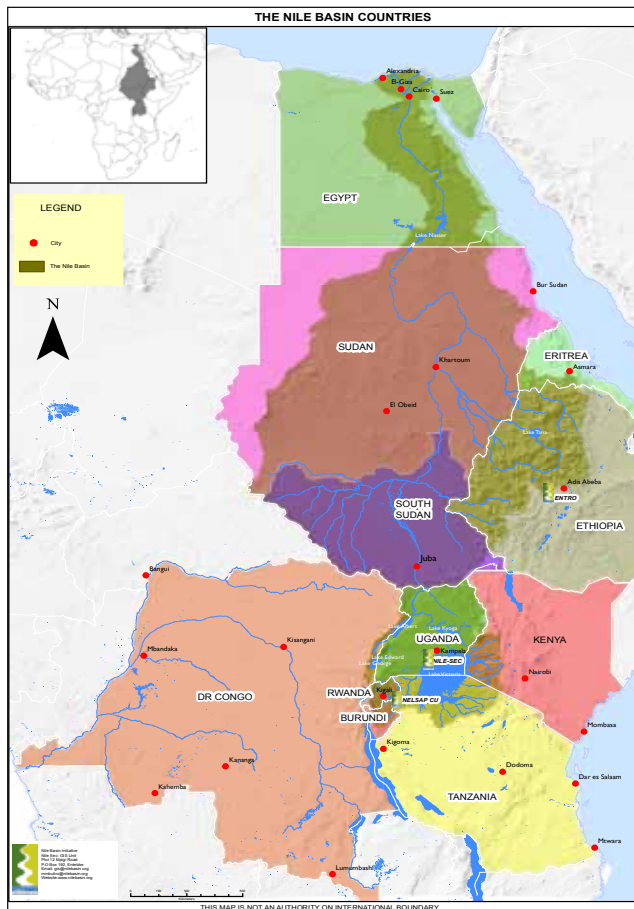
COOPERATION ON THE NILE

**The Nile Basin Initiative inspires
hitherto dialogue among riparian
countries for joint management and
development of the common Nile
Basin water resources**

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WHY NILE COOPERATION



The River Nile is a trans-boundary resource shared by eleven African countries¹ with a total population of 437 million people². It is one of the world's longest rivers, stretching about 6,695 kilometers from the farthest source of its headwaters in the Kagera Basin in Rwanda and Burundi through Lake Victoria, to its delta in Egypt on the Mediterranean Sea. The Nile drains an area of 3.2 million square kilometers – about 10 per cent of Africa.

The Nile Basin is endowed with a rich cultural history, world class environmental assets such as the Sudd in South Sudan, which is one of the world's largest fresh water wetlands; the world's second largest inland lake, Lake Victoria (shared by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and associated unique endemic flora and fauna. The Basin hosts diverse eco-regions which feature immense diversity, including huge tributary rivers, waterfalls, large lakes, wetlands, floodplains, forests, savannahs, montane ecosystems as well as arid and hyper-arid lands

(deserts). It also hosts some of the world's largest congregations of large mammals and flocks of migratory birds from Eurasia and other regions of Africa. The Basin has also hosted some of the oldest civilizations of mankind.

At the same time the Basin is facing ever-growing challenges and pressures. Climate Change is expected to increase the likelihood of extreme events (prolonged droughts and floods) which will adversely affect the food, water and energy security of the riparian countries. These are compounded by high demographic growth rates (in seven of the 11 riparian countries, population will double in the coming 20 - 25 years) and by the demands of faster economic growth across the basin. Furthermore, the Nile is relatively a water scarce river compared to major rivers of the world (volume is only 5% of the Congo River at Inga, for example). The upper catchments of the Basin face huge soil loss due to land degradation; the wetlands in the midsection are increasingly threatened by commercial agriculture and land conversion, at the extreme end the Nile Delta by sea water intrusion and soil salinization. In all the regions of the Basin there is on-going significant loss of biodiversity.

The scientific understanding of the Nile has been limited due to insufficient basin-wide hydrologic, meteorological, climatic, socio-economic, ecosystem related data and information, not to speak of analytic tools and systems and institutional capabilities. There is also asymmetry among the riparian countries in terms of water infrastructure development, institutional and technical capacity (relatively well developed in the two most downstream coun-



South Sudan joined the NBI [2012] because we believe in working together with our partners in the Basin to address the common challenges and risks to our common water resources, including floods, droughts, land degradation and climate change. We are determined to work closely with all Nile riparian countries towards an enhanced cooperation in the Basin.



Hon. Paul Mayom Akec, former Nile-COM Chair and Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Republic of South Sudan.

¹ Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, The Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda

² Source: UN Population Division; World Population Prospects, 2010 Revision

tries and at incipient stage in the upstream countries). These challenges and threats are by their very nature trans-boundary and no single country is capable of addressing them or their consequences on its own.

Despite these seemingly formidable challenges, the River Nile holds tremendous opportunities for growth, being one of the least developed rivers in the world. The Nile Basin offers significant potentials for cooperative management and development of the common water resources that would confer direct and indirect win-win benefits to all riparian countries. The Basin has significant potential for clean energy (hydropower) development and power trade; for improving and expanding both irrigated and rain-fed agricultural production and increasing water use efficiency; for preservation and use for eco-tourism of designated biospheres which are significant to sustaining global biological diversity. There is also potential for broader economic-regional integration, promotion of regional peace and security; and most important for jointly ensuring the continued existence of the River Nile for posterity through prudent and judicious utilization.

Recognizing that cooperation on the Nile is crucial to tackle the various development challenges, take advantage of the opportunities for win-win outcomes and to save the River Nile, which continues to be an essential fountain of life for the Nile Basin citizens, the riparian countries have been banding together for more than 45 years.

Nile Cooperation started with the Hydromet project in 1967, focusing on hydro meteorological survey

in the lakes region. Running in parallel to Hydromet was 'Undugu' from 1983 to 1992 whose focus was on the establishment of Nile Basin Economic Community. This was later followed by the Technical Cooperation Committee for the Promotion of Development and Environmental Protection of the Basin (TECCONILE) in 1993 among others. TECCONILE focused on technical cooperation (environmental and water quality). However, all these initiatives were beset with lack of inclusivity (there were riparian countries not represented in the effort) and above all, they did not anchor the cooperation effort in a comprehensive institutional setting and within the ambit of a Shared Vision.

Appreciating the above challenges, the realization of the potential inter-riparian conflict that would ensue from poorly managed, increasingly shrinking and scarce Nile water resources and aware of the significance of an all-inclusive partnership in unlocking the huge mutual benefits from coordinated management and development of the common Nile Basin water resources, the riparian states, with significant support from the international community launched a remarkable partnership, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) on 22 February 1999 to work towards attaining their **Shared Vision objective**: *'To achieve sustainable socio-economic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin Water resources'*.

This paper briefly introduces NBI, demonstrates its role in building Nile cooperation thus far (against a background of low levels of cooperation), highlights the success factors and draws attention to the lessons learned.



The magnificent Murchison Falls on the R. Nile in Uganda

THE NILE BASIN INITIATIVE



Representatives of NBI Member States and Development Partners during the 8th Strategic Dialogue, held in October 2013. The theme for the Dialogue was 'Investing in Nile Cooperation-Furthering the gains'

The NBI is a 10 Member regional inter-governmental partnership (Eritrea participates as an observer) which was established as a transitional mechanism that will phase out when the permanent River Nile Basin Commission is established following the conclusion of the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) negotiations.

Ministers in charge of Water Affairs (Nile-COM) in the riparian countries form NBI's highest decision and policy-making organ. The Nile-COM is supported by a Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC), comprised of 20 senior government officials, two from each of the partner states.

The NBI is managed from three Centers: the Secretariat (Nile-SEC) based in Entebbe - Uganda, the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO) based in Addis Ababa - Ethiopia and the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program Coordination Unit (NELSAP-CU) based in Kigali - Rwanda. NBI implements three core programs, namely Basin Cooperation, Water Resource Management and Water Resource Development.

Facilitating Nile Cooperation

The NBI facilitates, supports and nurtures cooperation amongst the Nile Basin countries so as to promote timely and efficient joint actions required for securing benefit from the common Nile Basin water resources.

Before NBI, there was lack of confidence and trust among riparian countries to engage in cooperative trans-boundary programs and projects; there was no basin-wide mechanism to communicate and ex-

change information, no institutional foundation for joint management of the common water resources and there was low level stakeholder involvement in the Nile process. Not only would NBI have to overcome decades of mistrust, it would have to unite countries with widely different cultures, economies, water needs and water resources.

Today, NBI continues to actively provide and operate the first and only all-inclusive platform for riparian countries to discuss with trust and confidence, the joint management and development of the common Nile Basin water and related resources.

Starting virtually from scratch, NBI has built and facilitated various multi-level platforms [project, national, sub-regional and regional] and multi-stakeholder platforms [policy and decision makers, opinion leaders, Members of Parliament, civil society, women, youth, communities, the private sector, media, academia, researchers and scientists] with the aim of raising awareness, promoting an informed dialogue and building a solid foundation for mutual understanding, trust and confidence so as to move forward in a cooperative way to realize tangible benefits.

“ At the beginning, we would be in a room and we wouldn't talk to each other - we saw each other as enemies. No one would talk in meetings because of the suspicion. ”

Dr. Callist Tindimugaya, Uganda's Commissioner for Water Resources Planning and Regulation and Nile-TAC member.

By building and running strong shared institutions (Nile-SEC, ENTRO and NELSAP-CU); building effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder platforms; and securing commitment from Member States (by providing a recognized service) NBI has helped im-



Permanent Secretaries of Ministries in charge of Water Affairs in NBI Member States during an experience sharing tour to the Eastern Nile sub-basin. Among other things, they visited the Blue Nile in Ethiopia



Field visit and consultation with farmers at Gezira Scheme in Sudan

prove the hitherto low level of cooperation among Member States.

In addition, NBI has built a strong technical foundation for cooperative water resources management and development, including a comprehensive shared knowledge base on the water and related resources of the Nile as well as tools to enable countries understand the implications of their actions on neighbors and opportunities for managing risks and realizing tangible benefits. Tools such as the Nile Basin Decision Support System (NB-DSS) and the Nile Equatorial Lakes and Eastern Nile Planning Models respectively, have been operationalized to provide the necessary analysis to inform decision-making in water resources planning and management.

Furthermore, NBI's facilitation of joint preparation and implementation of investments by Member States has enabled the latter to establish common values, principles and norms, without which long-term cooperation would be difficult or impossible.

Today after 14 years, remarkable progress has been made. The Nile Basin is witnessing observable improvement in both the extent and quality of cooperation among Member States. The bellicose tone has morphed into a discourse built on mutual trust; and a sustained change from questioning whether a cooperative approach should be pursued, to asking questions on how cooperation could be pursued

and whether the 'perceived benefits' will result in 'tangible benefits'. To this end, it is worth recognizing that South Sudan joined NBI in 2012 and that

Sudan that had hitherto frozen its participation in NBI activities since 2010 due to disagreements over the CFA, resumed participation in 2013. These events among others, clearly demonstrate that riparian countries believe cooperation is the only way forward, and that NBI provides the most viable platform for cooperation.

Even though disagreements still exist, riparian countries no longer

approach the issue of the River Nile from the perspective of the 'rightful owner', but as a 'shared resource' and that what happens in one country, positive or negative, affects the other hence the need for joint management and development for the benefit of all. This is a 'historic effort.'

A 2008 World Bank commissioned public opinion poll in eight NBI Member States indicated an atmosphere of trust and confidence among riparian countries.

“ Just building confidence and trust has been a major achievement, water resources used to be a big secret, but now we communicate openly. Everyone sees now that management can't just be done by one country. There must be a partnership. ”

Lister Kongola, former Nile-TAC member from Tanzania.

The all-inclusive platform for cooperation has created an enabling environment for strong joint institutions (Nile-SEC, ENTRO and NEL-SAP-CU) - providing a platform for continued dialogue and regular fora for technical discussions.

Joint management of trans-boundary water resources is a complex issue requiring a credible knowledge base, along with specially developed skills and institutions. NBI Member States have built a common information system and shared analytical tools to increase capacity to jointly plan and manage the common Nile Basin water and related resources. Associated with this is the guidelines for implementing the interim procedures for data and information sharing and exchange which were approved by the Nile-COM in 2011.

Furthermore, the all-inclusive platform for cooperation has created an enabling environment for joint preparation and implementation of investments in Power, Agriculture and Regional Trade as well as River Basin Management and Development, all aimed at bringing tangible benefits to the citizens of the Nile Basin and distributing costs among participating countries.

The investment projects, worth over USD 1 billion are at different stages of implementation by Member States. They include the now operational Ethiopia-Sudan interconnection with the 100MW power trade from Ethiopia to Sudan benefiting 1.4 million households; the USD 403 million Regional Transmission Interconnection project where an estimated 1500km of 220kv and 110kv transmission lines and associated sub-stations are under construction to facilitate power trade among Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda as well as the long stalled USD 470 million Regional Rusumo Falls Hydro-electric project which will generate 80MW to benefit Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. Others are the Eastern Nile Watershed Management project jointly implemented by Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan through which fast track projects worth about USD 80 million have been prepared.



Laying pipes for the Mella Water Supply project in Tororo, Uganda



Ethiopia-Sudan interconnection



Representatives of NBI Member States and Donors during a visit to the Rusumo Site in October 2013

"NBI Member States are now witnessing the benefits of cooperation such as the now operational Ethiopia-Sudan Power Transmission Interconnection which has made power trade and the creation of synergy between the power utilities of Ethiopia and Sudan possible." H.E. Ayalew Gobeze, President of the Amhara National Regional State, speaking as Guest of Honor during the 2013 Regional Nile Day celebrations in Bahir Dar - Ethiopia

The success in Nile cooperation thus far is attributable to a number of factors including the following:

NBI provides its Member States with a recognized service hence their commitment to the Nile cooperation. The latter is demonstrated by Member States continuation to work together despite the hurdles faced by the 'political track' in relation to the CFA. The 'development track' continues to operate focusing on technical issues and building practical channels of trans-boundary cooperation.

Effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder engagement is a key requirement for cooperation to succeed. While the NBI approach of convening various fora, organizing different events, targeting multi-stakeholders and at various levels may have been lengthy and slow, it was worth it. This approach effectively brought together experts across the region and other stakeholder groups into constructive engagement, dialogue and decision making to respond to the identified challenges and address identified needs. The approach has continued to greatly contribute to building the much needed trust and confidence and to keep NBI's diverse stakeholders well informed, actively engaged and committed to the Nile cooperation and the NBI processes.

The multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder involvement processes is not only complex, but is also lengthy, challenging and requires long term, consistent, predictable and flexible funding. While more often than not development partners are not keen in engaging with such initiatives, NBI has benefitted from the consistent, predictable, long term and flexible financial support from development partners. The latter have provided more than USD 200 million for NBI's programs over the last 11 years, channeled through the World Bank administered Nile Basin Trust Fund. This is in addition to the coordinated key bilateral financing arrangements made with the African Development Bank, Sweden through SIDA and the Federal Republic of Germany through GIZ as well as annual subscriptions from Member States.

A strong institution is a key factor in support to international best practice in cooperation and response to challenges. NBI has achieved a strong foundation for institutional sustainability, enhanced capacity and harmonized corporate management to more effectively deliver its core functions and serve its Member States. Policy, technical and strategic guidance provided by the Nile-COM and Nile-TAC



Water Affairs Ministers and other Nile Basin citizens during the 2013 Regional Nile Day celebrations held in Bahir-Dar, Ethiopia in February

continues to play a role in strengthening the NBI. Complementing this is the scientific based information and knowledge generated by NBI, which is vital for strengthening cooperation.

The diversity in the geographical expanse and physical characteristics of the Nile Basin underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach to the management and development of the Basin. Addressing the challenges which are sometimes varied requires action to take place at the lowest appropriate level. This was the basis for the NBI set-up, hence the two Subsidiary Action Programs (SAPs), Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Program (ENSAP) and Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP). This set up has enabled NBI to leverage the unique potentials and mitigate risks in the respective sub-basins.

Lessons Learned

Albeit the enormous progress in trans-boundary cooperation on the Nile, the process is indeed a complex one and a number of lessons have been learned from the NBI experience, key among them the following:

- Strong Institutions at all levels are vital to push forward the cooperation agenda
- While multi-country, multi-level and multi-sectoral consultative processes are complex, lengthy and expensive requiring consistent, predictable and flexible funding, they are key to ensure relevance to country needs and ownership.
- Inherent slow pace of realising joint investment projects prepared by NBI with participation of the Member States means delays in meeting demands of growing economies and populations. This, in turn could lead to an increasing number of major water resources investment projects (e.g. dams,

power plants) planned and implemented unilaterally by individual riparian states and ultimately affect the spirit of cooperation on the Nile and the sustainability of the River Nile itself.

- Part of the reason for the slow rate in increasing cooperation on the Nile has been the lack of regional economic integration of the Member States and a lack of an overarching regional institutional arrangement under which water cooperation could take place.

From the above, it is clear that Nile cooperation under the auspices of NBI has been a huge success thus far. NBI has launched, deepened and advanced an on-going dialogue; providing the first and only all-inclusive platform for regional dialogue in trans-boundary water issues open virtually to anyone in the region. Indeed the cooperative approach remains the only choice for Member States to sustain what has been accomplished, jointly address the re-

gion's trans-boundary water resources management and development challenges and take advantage of the opportunities for win-win benefits especially now that the jointly prepared investment projects are at various stages of implementation. Needless to say, being in its nascent stage, the all-inclusive Nile cooperation requires even more commitment and momentum from Member States, Nile Basin citizens and Development Partners.

"Before NBI, our Basin was a region of mistrust and conflict. Trust among countries was not in abundant supply. It is therefore very important to keep in mind that building enduring regional cooperation and meeting all the necessary technical, institutional, organizational, financial, requirements that goes with it, takes time". Hon. Kebede Gerba, Ethiopia's State Minister of Water and Energy, speaking as Guest of Honor during ENTRO'S 10th anniversary celebrations that took place on 23rd October, 2012.



Nile Basin citizens and partners celebrate 10 years of cooperation and progress in December 2009 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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