

The Niles

Issue 12
August 2018
Nairobi, Kenya

**Where is the river
coming from, where
does it go**

page 4

**Why nations that
share the same
resources must unite**

page 6

**Connecting power
across borders**

page 11

**The dire bond of
climate change**

page 14

**Radio as a
community builder**

page 19

Rain does not fall on one roof alone.

This proverb, many say, suggests that trouble comes to everyone at one time or another. One could focus on the foreboding aspect of it, but we could understand the proverb as a reminder that rain, and in a broader sense water, is a resource we all share – it belongs to all of us. Like the proverb, the River Nile is often seen in a negative light, with the focus on the issues, positions and interests that separate and disconnect us. In this edition of The Niles, however, our correspondents from across the basin take a closer look at aspects that connect people throughout the Nile Basin countries. As each story ventures into different locations, we catch a glimpse of how politics, economies, environments and cultures are linked and positively influence one another, and how these connections have existed for thousands of years.



**Everything
is connected with
each other**

The Niles is a publication of Media
in Cooperation and Transition gGmbH

Chief Editor: Sven Recker
Editors: Rose-Anne Clermont,
Dominik Lehnert
Managing Editor: Dirk Spilker
Design: Gunnar Bauer

Contributors:
Ayah Aman, Mugume Davis, Sylvester
Domasa, Sarah El-Sheikh, Elzahraa
Jadallah, Henry Lutaaya, Jean Paul
Mbarushimana, Selam Mulugeta,
Frederic Musisi, Esther Muwombi,
Asmaa Nassar, Fabien Niyonizigiye,
Tesfa-Alem Tekle, Tuver Wundi

Pictures:
Michael Christopher Brown / Magnum
Photos / Agentur Focus (p. 1), The Niles /
Selam Mulugeta (p. 7), Agentur Focus /
Armin Smilovic (p. 8), The Niles /
Mugume Davis (p. 9), Corbis via Getty
Images / Hulton-Deutsch Collection
(p. 10), Photothek via Getty Images /
Thomas Koehler (p. 13), Cosmos /
Agentur Focus / Frédéric Noy (p. 14),
The Asahi Shimbun Premium via Getty
Images (p. 16), The Niles / Tuver Wundi
(p. 17), AFP / Getty Images / Roberto
Schmidt (p. 18), Magnum Photos /
Agentur Focus / Alex Majoli (p. 19)

This issue of The Niles is produced
by Media in Cooperation and Transition
(MiCT) and brings together contributions
from journalists who participated in a
media workshop hosted in collaboration
with the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). The
publication is realised with support from
the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internatio-
nale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH,
commissioned by the German Federal
Foreign Office (AA). The views expressed
in this publication do not reflect the
opinions of NBI, AA, GIZ or MiCT.

Contact:
Media in Cooperation and Transition
Dirk Spilker
dirk@mict-international.org
Brunnenstraße 9
10119 Berlin, Germany
Phone +49 (0)30 4849 3020
www.mict-international.org
www.theniles.org

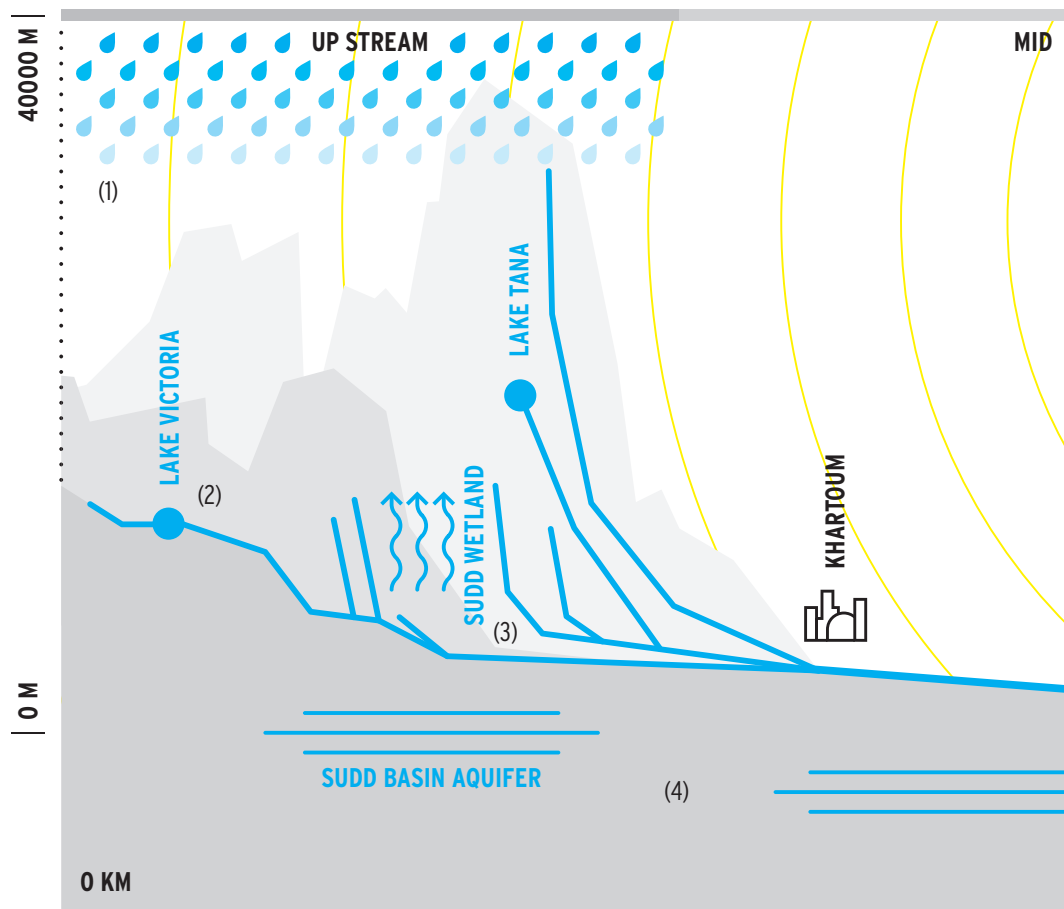
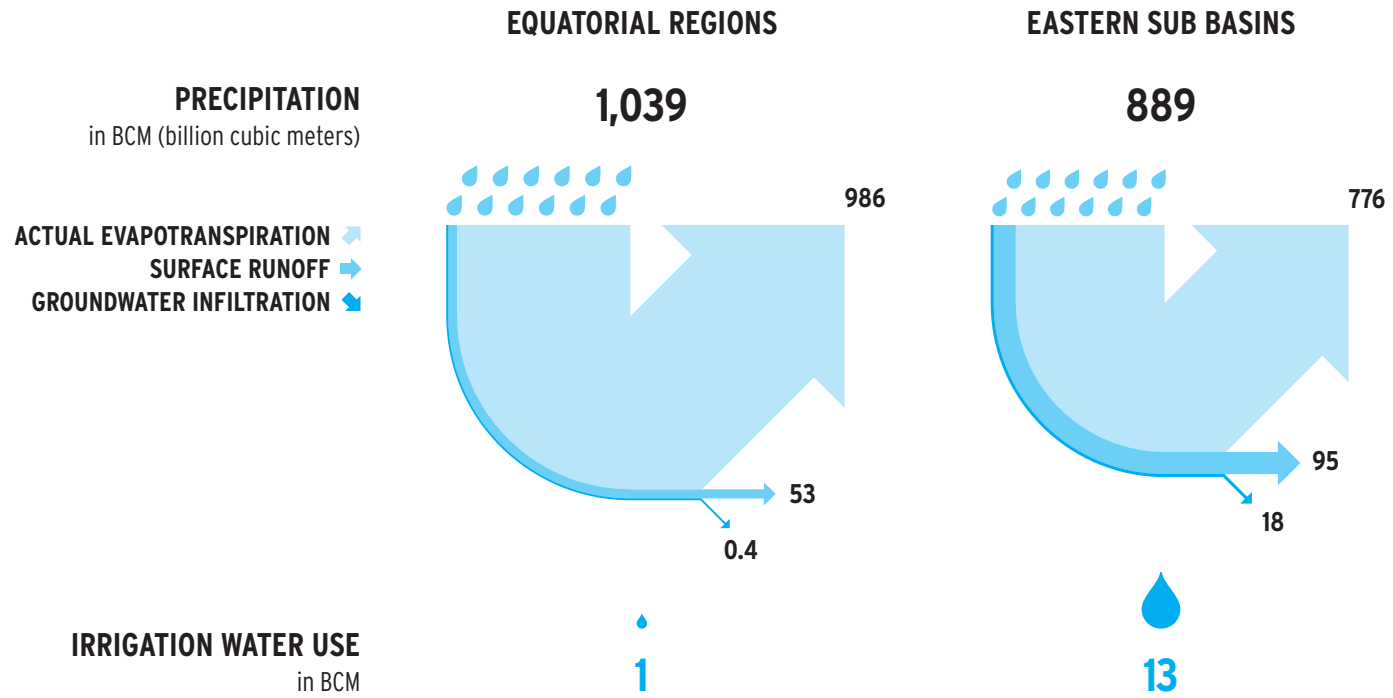
© 2018, all rights reserved.



Lake Kivu, on the border between
the Democratic Republic of the Congo
and Rwanda, is only one of many water
bodies connecting countries in the
Nile Basin.

Contents

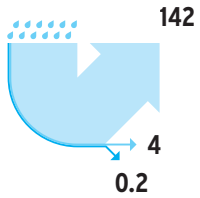
Everything is connected: the hydrology of the Nile (p. 4) with the never ending circle of water, water with life and life with almost everything in the world. So let's have a look why countries that share a resource must join forces to protect their livelihoods (p. 6). This has been made easier by the opening of transportation connections across the Nile Basin region. Like a new 1,500-kilometre bus route between Addis Ababa and Khartoum, which has changed life for many along its path (p. 7). And a newly opened road along the Tanzanian and Burundian border has allowed the citizens of those countries to move and trade more freely (p. 8). In fact, trade has existed in this region since ancient times (p. 9), which has long attracted the interest of foreigners, who have not always been altruistic with their investments in The Nile region (p. 10). Yet foreigners, such as the Japanese, have made significant investments in boosting hydroelectric power, helping Uganda realise a high voltage transmission line from Uganda to South Sudan (p. 11). Rwanda plans on a major increase in energy imports, mainly coming from Ethiopia, but the path goes through Kenya and Uganda, requiring a collaborative effort (p. 13). Indeed, all of the Nile Basin neighbours will have to put their resources together to deal with the unmistakable effects of climate change (p. 14), which could have devastating effects in the region. Yet Nile Basin neighbours have already begun to work together to deal with environmental issues like the water hyacinth, which looks like a lovely, floating flower but in reality, has wreaked havoc across Lake Tana (p. 16). And Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo, who both share Lake Edward, must agree on fishing techniques to have a more cooperative and sustainable fishing culture (p. 17). And while Nile Basin countries exist within close proximity of one another, they speak different languages and have completely different educational systems. These differences make studying within the basin a challenge for some students and a life saver for others (p. 18). Yet differences in culture can often be opportunities to share and celebrate diversity, like in Uganda, which has one of the most liberal refugee programmes in the world and focuses on this diversity in its radio broadcasts directed at refugees, helping them integrate even better (p. 19). Connecting across cultural lines has been an essential part of the collaborative efforts of The Niles journalists themselves, who share how their professional and personal relationships have evolved over the years (p. 20).



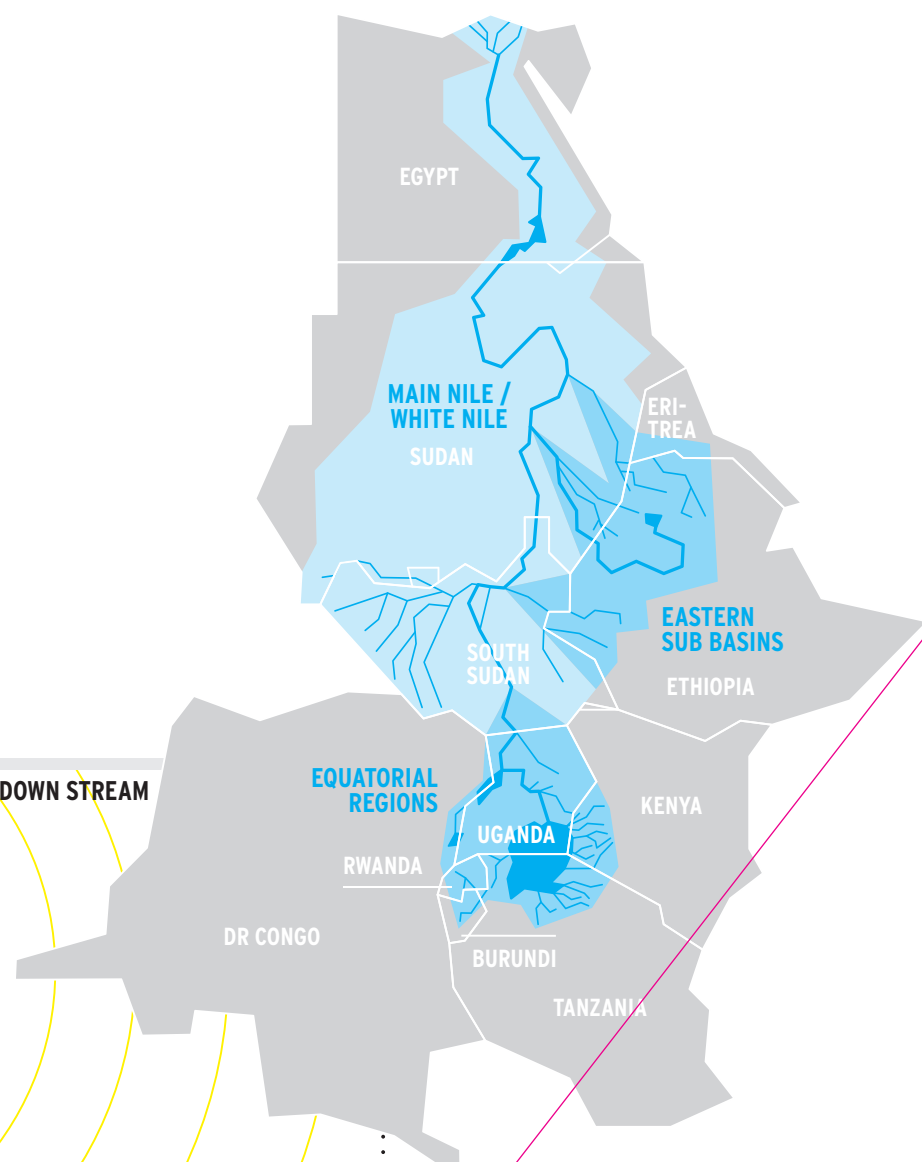
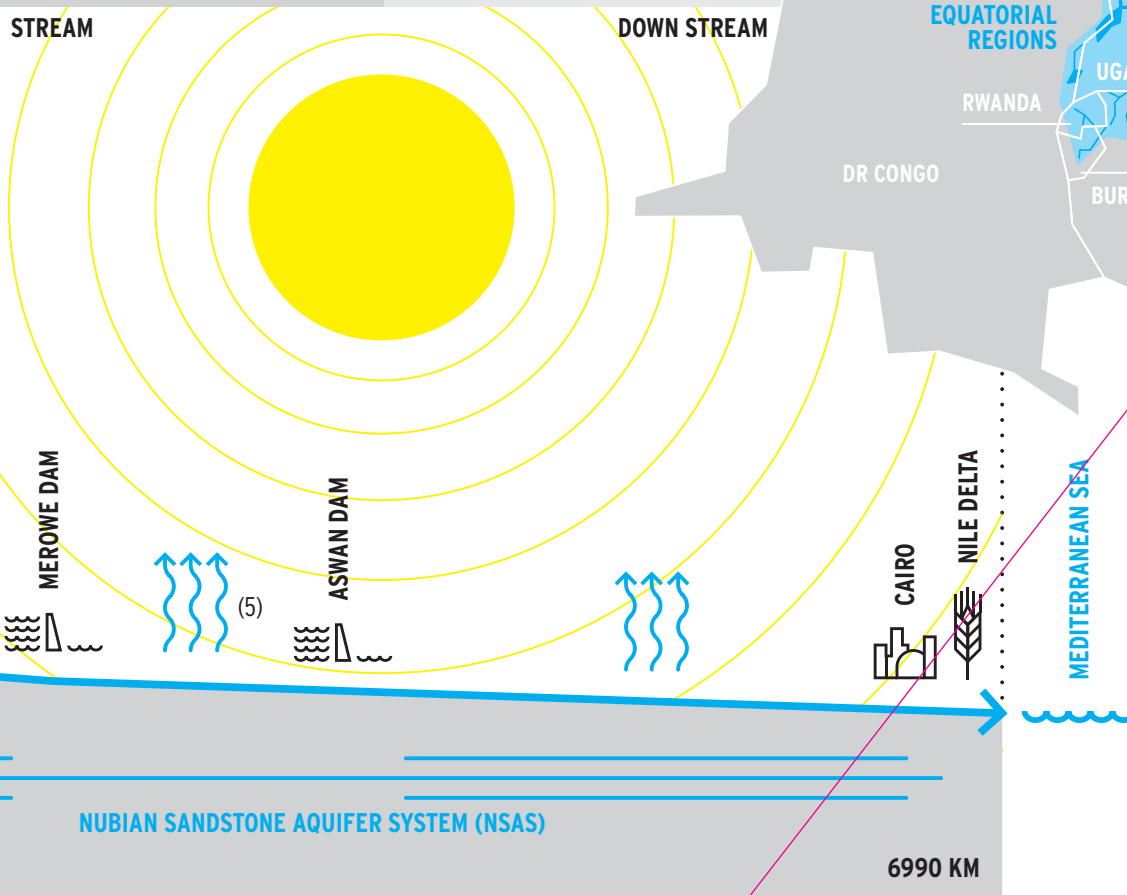
UNDERSTANDING THE NILE: WHERE IS THE RIVER COMING FROM, WHERE DOES IT GO

MAIN NILE / WHITE NILE

146



57



(1) WATER TOWERS

Specific regions in the Nile Basin generate the vast majority of Nile water flow. These high-altitude areas experience heavy rainfall and lower temperatures. The main water towers within the Nile Basin are the Ethiopian Highlands, Mt. Elgon, Mt. Rwenzori and the Albertine Rift.

(2) LAKES

The Nile Basin has numerous lakes which play an essential role in regulating the flow of Nile water. Major lakes like Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, Lake Tana and Lake Kyoga significantly influence the outflow due to storage and regulation.

(3) SUDD WETLAND

The Sudd is one of the most extensive wetlands in Africa. It plays a significant role in minimising seasonal flow variations of the White Nile – it reduces flows due to high evapotranspiration, limits floods during the wet season and supports flow during the dry season.

(4) GROUNDWATER

The Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS) is the largest transboundary groundwater resource in the Nile Basin region. Aquifers across the basin are highly heterogeneous, ranging from shallow local ones (actively replenished by rainfall), to deep regional systems.

(5) EVAPOTRANSPIRATION

Evapotranspiration is one of the major components of the water balance over the Nile Basin, accounting for about 87 per cent of the Basin's rainfall. It however varies from one sub-basin to another based on land use/cover and the prevailing climatic conditions.

A shared destiny

Why nations that share the same resources must unite.

By Henry Lutaaya
Kampala, Uganda

Countries all over the world invest fortunes in erecting fences and boundaries to separate their people from the rest of the world, but how much is being done to build bridges?

Nationalistic tendencies that force us to think in a box deprive us of the broader perspectives on how our actions impact the rest of humanity or how we are impacted by the activities of the rest of the world. For example, as Western countries industrialised, they pumped vast amounts of dangerous gasses into the atmosphere, which has resulted in the phenomenon of global warming. And yet, the effects of global warming are clearly being felt more in the less industrialised parts of the world than in countries that contributed most to causing the global phenomenon.

Thinking of connections from a natural perspective, scientific evidence shows that upstream countries of the Nile River contribute most to its flow through rainfall, yet utilise the least through irrigation and abstraction of water for domestic and industrial use.

Without building bridges between upstream and downstream countries, through communication and coordinated planning for the sustainable management and utilisation of this great resource, scientific evidence has shown that the lives of nearly half a billion people in the Nile Basin region are threatened by the spectre of rising water, food and energy scarcity – challenges that directly relate to the river's flow.

Outside the natural realm, advances in information communication technology have added momentum to the era of globalisation – affecting everyone. And the Nile Basin community of 11 countries is not an island. Globalisation, for example, has meant that people realise or seek opportunities,

migrate and start new relationships, and exchange goods and services much faster.

For example, the number of passenger bus companies plying the Nairobi-Kampala route has increased from two in the year 2000 to more than ten to date. Similarly, the number of South Sudanese living in Kampala and in other parts of Uganda, or in Khartoum and Nairobi, either voluntarily or because of the political instability in their country, is at an all-time high.

Wars, insurgency, governance problems and natural disasters are forcing millions of people in the region to cross borders to other countries as refugees. Some, perhaps because of specialised skills, eventually find work and blend with the newfound communities, depending on the host country's government policies. Regional employment, education, and sheer fate – such as two people of different nationalities falling in love and marrying – is becoming ever more common and acceptable in the Nile Basin.

Whether they are outcomes of natural disasters or voluntary exchanges, movements and connections between the people of the Nile Basin are bound to grow as the population of the region increases towards one billion people in 2050.

The anticipated expansion in population and economic activities in the Nile Basin will inevitably create new connections and interactions. But to ensure win-win situations for both upstream and downstream countries, or between communities along and beyond borders, there is a need for an atmosphere of social, economic and political cooperation to guarantee peaceful co-existence.

KHARTOUM

1,500 KM

WAD MADANI

SD

SS

Movements and connections between the people of the Nile Basin are bound to grow.

theniles.org/
en/
articles/
politics/
20641



Forging a new path between Ethiopia and Sudan

“Now I have found an affordable means of transport to travel back to Ethiopia any time I want to visit my family.”

A bus connection between Addis Ababa and Khartoum bridges both physical and emotional distance.

In a close relationship spanning centuries, Ethiopia and Sudan share a lot more than political borders. One sign of their cultural connection is the popularity of Sudanese music across different cities in Ethiopia.

Another, more recent phenomenon that has brought the two countries even closer together is a fairly simple one.

For about a year, it has become common to see Sudanese license plates on public transport buses rattling across Addis Ababa's busy streets. Sudanese music pours out of their windows and the wheels are directed toward Khartoum, crossing the Ethio-Sudanese border. These enormous buses operate the only cross national, inland public transport from Addis Ababa.

Melaku Meskele is an Ethiopian passenger traveling from Khartoum to Addis Ababa, Meskel Square. It has been four years since he moved to Sudan. “Before, my only choice to travel back to Ethiopia was by air, but it was too expensive on my small income. Now I have found an affordable means of transport to travel back to Ethiopia any time I want to visit my family.”

Among the six countries that neighbour Ethiopia, Sudan shares the longest border and inhabits the largest Ethiopian population.

Ancient bonds

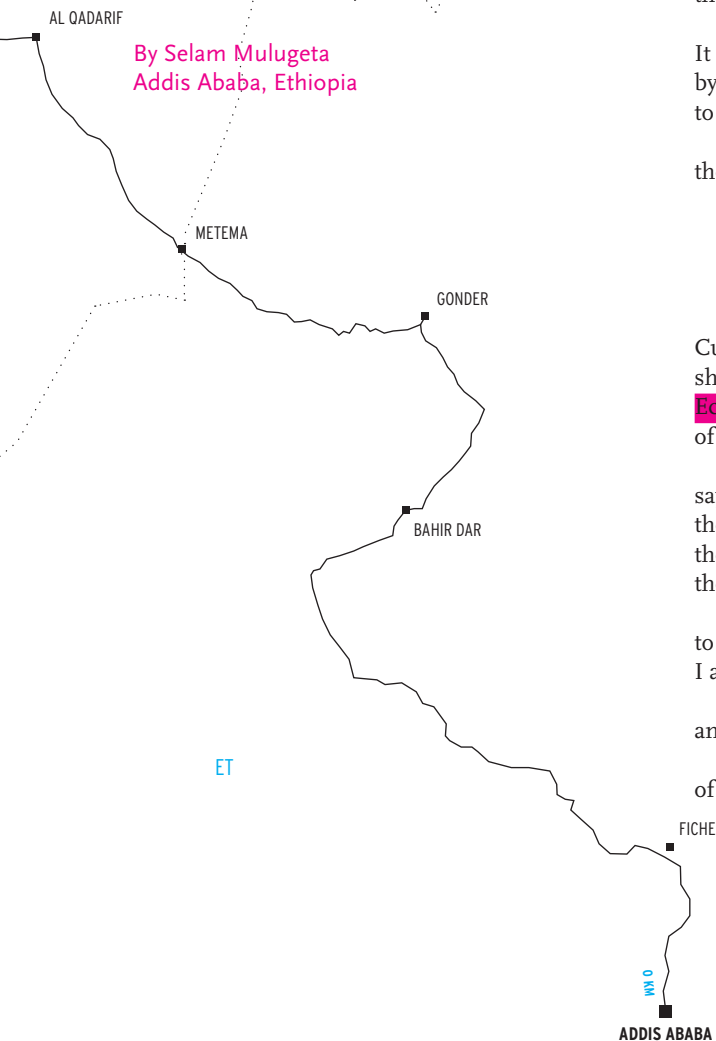
As ancient centres of civilisation, the two countries' relationship started with trade and culture. Currently, this relationship is being strengthened through political, economic and intercommoned relationships. The governments of the two nations have committees that summon their leaders every year. **Economic integration, trade development, and investment** are three of the 13 important focus areas of their joint committees.

Federal Transport Authority of Ethiopia's Deputy Director of Public Transport, Tesfaye Solomon says, the dominant factor for starting the inland public transport was to strengthen the relationship between the two countries. He also remarks that there have been a series of discussions that took years before the bus route's commencement, and it was launched after the two countries reached the consensus that the route would open doors to more ways of connecting.

Another passenger along the 1,500 km Addis Ababa – Khartoum inland route is Merima Ali. “I used to feel very far away, both physically and emotionally. But now I can travel from Khartoum to Addis like I am traveling to the country side.”

The two-day journey beginning from Addis travels 800 kilometres within the Ethiopian border and ends after 700 more kilometres along Sudanese roads.

“I lived in Khartoum for 10 years,” said one passenger. “But I never had a clue what other parts of Sudan looked like.”



theniles.org/
en/
articles/
politics/
20642



With flights being mostly unaffordable, bus connections play an important role across the Nile Basin.





An opened border binds two countries

A road linking Burundi and Tanzania has opened up trade and other connections, improving life for people on both sides.

By Fabien Niyonizigiye
Bujumbura, Burundi

Burundi's Kobero border, which is shared with the Republic of Tanzania, is located in a zone called Butarugero, Butihinda commune, situated approximately 20 kilometres from the city center of Muyinga province. The road that once served as a separation is now open, giving Burundians direct access to the East African Community (EAC).

Trade and movement flow freely between the two countries and Burundians are able to collaborate with the other member states and adopt common standards, like tax collection for example, adopted by all EAC member states.

But the most tangible advantage for everyday Burundians is the common market where trading among merchants and sellers is visibly present.

The Niles went to see the trading atmosphere for ourselves and spoke to various people whose lives have been affected by the new connection at the Kobero border:

Ange Dany Gakunzi, OBR spokesperson (Office Burundais des Recettes, Burundi Revenue Authority) says:

"There are times when we go to Tanzania, whenever we want, to purchase some goods such as these soft drinks and sell them afterwards. Nowadays, there is no difficulty in crossing into Tanzania to simply do our business ventures.

In my point of view, the importance of this border is that nowadays the merchants and sellers passing through this border, purchase and sell goods at equal costs and prices because the Kobero border agents have taken measures to actively fight against illegal transborder trading. That is why the border is well secured."

Aline Kabagabire, a local seller says:

"We sell rice and furniture equipment. If I tell the customs agents that I just want to cross the border to go and purchase products, they simply give me a small pass paper. And that is it. What we see is that they simply ask you where you are coming from and where you are headed. If you want to go further in the neighbouring country, you basically consult the immigration office and then get a stamp for your travel documents such as a passport or a Laissez-passé and then you are set to go. So, yes the easy work flow and accessibility is really advantageous for us, otherwise I would have stopped doing business here if it were difficult to pass through the border. And we truly see that people working at the border really help us in order to do our business ventures in an easy and conducive business environment."

Epipode Minani, police officer in charge of border activities at Kobero border control, says: "Here the flow of people and activities is going well. You have seen that we are constantly receiving and welcoming people such as travellers coming from our neighbouring countries, notably Tanzania, Uganda, or Kenya. They all pass through this border.

Before, travellers had to check in twice, first at the Tanzanian office and then at the Burundian office but now since we are jointly collaborating in one place, it is easier for the travellers to check in automatically in one place and then let them continue their journeys.

The only challenge that we are currently tackling is that when we detect someone who does not possess all the official papers for his goods, we might delay him for a day or two until he clears with all the necessary documentation. Otherwise,

"Nowadays, there is no difficulty in crossing into Tanzania to simply do our business ventures."

we try our best to offer the best services to the EAC travellers so that they can travel in a free and relaxed manner because we are in a regional community."

Governor of Muyinga Province Aline Maniraburusa says: "First of all, I would like to start on the security sector, Tanzania and Burundi are countries living together peacefully because our mutuality is clearly positive and strong because Burundians travel freely to Tanzania and vice versa. Moreover, there are more goods from other countries, which come to Burundi by passing through Tanzania. You see that there is also a large number of trucks at the border.

Tanzania welcomes most imported products in Burundi. That's also a point which shows that there are peaceful relations between Burundi and Tanzania."

"We also see that the residents of Muyinga have become open minded and are now well aware of the value and importance of paying taxes. And as a result those who used to smuggle goods in the country illegally have been largely and effectively stopped. That's why it is visible that we are receiving abundant revenues in terms of customs taxes."

"In the time that the travellers spend here, they use our hotels, they eat and sleep here. And that is how the revenues are coming in. Moreover, those who sell beverages and food specialties are also benefiting from the travellers. We can generally acknowledge that the flow of activities here at the border is very beneficial to our country and citizens."

Business across borders



Brisk business: selling snacks and drinks to bus passengers.

Trade is the key connector in the Nile Basin.

By Mugume Davis
Kampala, Uganda

In Africa, particularly across the Nile, bartering was the initial means of trade in ancient times. Although ancient Egypt, for example, was a country rich in many natural resources it was not self-sufficient and had to rely on trade for necessary goods and luxuries from other countries, including neighbours such as Sudan, according to scholar Joshua J. Mark. Across the Nile people traded ivory, gold, copper, agricultural products, livestock and others.

Today, the rest of Nile Basin countries, with a population of nearly 500 million, according to the Nile Basin Initiative, relate and trade among themselves. It is one of the main connectors of people in this region.

From food to hardware

Henry Mayende, a Ugandan businessman, deals in electronics, mainly cameras and office equipment. Although he sometimes imports from other countries such as United Arab Emirates (UAE) or China, he says buying goods from Nile Basin country Kenya is easier.

“I just don’t have to incur long-distance travel expenses and I don’t pay for a visa. This way increases my profits,” he says. Kenya is located across the Indian ocean and thus easily imports goods from a far.

Mayende has been in this business for 10 years. And with modern technology, he sometimes sends money to his partners in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, via Mpesa, who in turn sends him his orders.

“I feel at home when I am in Kampala, just like when I am in Kigali.”

Ismail Sebikali, a Ugandan businessman deals in hardware. He buys hardware from Uganda and sells it in South Sudan, crossing the River Nile twice – in Uganda at Karuma Falls and then in Juba at the Juba bridge. He sometimes also sells his goods in Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo.

“I have been in this business for about five years and I will keep doing so. For now, South Sudan is like my second country,” he says.

Congolese trader Ethien Mundeke trades in general merchandise including home items, food and beverages, which he buys from the Ugandan capital, Kampala and then transports it to DR Congo’s Bunia region. He says the common culture such as foods and languages make his work even easier.

A common language in a second home

“Even when I don’t understand their native language”, says Mindeke, “I speak in Swahili and most people in the region understand”.

Jean Marie Hakiza, a Rwandan businessman who also exports goods to DR Congo agrees with Mundeke. “I feel at home when I am in Kampala, just like when I am in Kigali,” he says.

But Hazika quickly points out the challenges. “The main challenge is that there are some corrupt officials along the road who ask for more money on weigh bridges.”

But he also says his business is affected by the constant dollar price fluctuations; this sometimes cuts into his profits.

Hazika also wonders why neighbours who share a border have to pay for a visa. Travellers from Uganda

or DR Congo have to part with US\$ 50 for a single-entry visa. The same is true for Ugandans or South Sudanese travelling across each nation.

Citizens of East African Countries Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda on the other hand, do not have a visa requirement.

Christopher Mulindwa, who deals in animal products and pigs, says he usually sells animal feed and piglets to traders in other Nile Basin countries, especially Kenya and Rwanda.

“What I like about dealing with these businessmen is that they prefer quantity and will thus be willing to pay a better fee,” Mulindwa says.

Intra-regional trade still minimal

However, Maganda Julius Wandera, Uganda’s Minister for East African Affairs says intra-regional trade in the Nile basin is still at its minimum and informal.

For example, he says Kenya and Rwanda experience a deficit of agricultural products of 400,000 metric tonnes and 150,000 metric tonnes in maize respectively, while Uganda has a surplus of 137,000 metric tonnes per year.

Minister Wandera says the region has acquired US\$ 6 million from Kilimo Trust, an East African based organisation that promotes agribusiness development to help boost quality and quantity production.

theniles.org/
en/
articles/
politics/
20643



Loaded: lorries are often loaded above capacity to maximise profits.





D

Interest and power in the Eastern Nile

There have always been foreign investors in the Eastern Nile Basin, but how much have these countries benefitted from the help?

By Ayah Aman & Sarah El-Sheikh
Cairo, Egypt



theniles.org/
en/
articles/
economy/
20645

ue to its geographic importance, Eastern Nile Basin countries – Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia – have long owned a great specialty in the Horn of Africa region, Middle East, and Red Sea, in ways that has always attracted foreign countries to seek their own benefit of the natural resources of these countries.

The foreign interference during the colonisation of the 18th century, which aimed at claiming the resources in the region, then later developed into strong economic bilateral relations, for additional growth.

These interventions have continued to date in the form of investments and international grants and funding.

Throughout the decades, it became clear that these interventions have impacted the cooperation between the Eastern Nile countries themselves and increased conflicts. Each of the three countries looked toward development through working with international communities to increase their investment, which mainly focused on Land and Water. However, it has yet to be seen how much foreign investment helps countries with a shared resource.

Support with strings attached

“The British came to the Nile Basin to get access to water and land resources where they could produce cotton and other products for their industries back at home,” said Fekahmed Negash Nuru, Executive Director of the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO).

In 1999, nine of the Nile Basin countries initiated a partnership called the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), in which ministers of water affairs from Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and later South Sudan, with Eritrea as an observer, established the NBI as a transitional mechanism as a platform for dialogue and joint work, to better understand and use the common Nile Basin resources.

Foreign powers tried to strengthen cooperation in the Nile Basin by supporting the establishment of the NBI, according to Nuru. “They provided financial and technical support but it was not free from influencing the direction of NBI or Eastern Nile Cooperation to suit their national interest.”

It is not the investment that is the source of conflict or cooperation between the countries, Nuru argues, rather it is the approach to the investment that matters. If the countries are positively cooperative with an understanding of each other’s interests, concerns, fears and risks investments can enhance cooperation as the countries can use these investments to build mutuality and interdependence among themselves. But if countries are going for investment in a scattered manner it will contribute to conflict among them.

Getting the most out of investments

Investment and financial support from international stakeholders – whoever they are – in the Nile Basin countries and specifically in water-related sectors can only be welcomed. It will contribute



theniles.org/
en/
articles/
economy/
20646

“With the understanding of each other’s interests, concerns, fears and risks investments can enhance cooperation.”

Workers begin to assemble masonry on the western channel during the construction of the Aswan Dam.

both for national and regional development in the Nile Basin. Ideally these new investments should be coordinated and harmonised in a cooperative manner between the countries – namely through institutions such as the NBI but as well other regional economic institutions – in order to foster benefits that can be shared by all parties.

Maria Vink, Programme Manager, Transboundary Water Management at the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) told The Niles: “External support can absolutely play a positive role as it can enable parties to meet and pave the way for dialogues that would otherwise not take place. International stakeholders have clearly played an important role in the Nile Basin, by supporting confidence building measures.”

“In the current situation it seems important that international stakeholders stay impartial in their support to the countries sharing the river. The support from third parties to the Nile Basin governments need to be based on expressions of interest for support from the basin states so that international stakeholders could respond in a constructive way. There are however, many different stakeholders in the basin, not only governments, that can play a crucial role in promoting cooperative approaches and find innovative solutions to cooperation hurdles. Academics, civil society and media can all play important roles and benefit from outside support,” she said.

Another shape of intervention was from the Gulf and Middle Eastern superpowers although they have been frustrated in the pursuit of their interests, politically as well as economically.

Intra-Nile Basin investments

“It would help if all Nile waters were kept within the basin, traded as virtual water, or through investment in land and water,” said Dr. Wubalem Fekade, Head of the Social Development and Communication Unit at the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO).

“I am a strong believer that intra Nile Basin investment in land and water, later in other sectors, including energy generation and trade, and industry and commerce should be given priority. Countries that invest in each other and trade with each other have material interest to keep the peace and to keep the momentum of cooperation, deepening and broadening it.”

Connecting power across borders

Two Nile Basin countries are among the world’s most populous energy deficit nations – but as East African countries continue to trade power, that could soon be a statistic of the past.

By Frederic Musisi
Kampala, Uganda

“But if all countries continue pursuing interconnection lines, within no time the network will have expanded around the region.”

U

ganda says the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is looking into the possibility of financing construction of a high voltage transmission line to sell power from its soon to be commissioned 600 megawatt Karuma hydropower dam near Kampala to the South Sudan capital Juba.

Uganda’s energy minister Irene Muloni told The Niles that JICA “had made inquiries” about the 393 kilometre power line, which is of “strategic importance” in power transmission across the East African region.

The two countries reportedly also approached the European Union to finance construction of the line.

Uganda and South Sudan first inked an agreement in October 2017 for supply of 400 kilovolts of power from Karuma Dam, which is located approximately 221 kilometres from the capital Kampala, to the border towns of Kaya and Nimule, to boost socio-economic activities around extending the transmission line to Juba.

The wider East African energy network

The Ugandan Energy Ministry said the deal was in tandem with the East Africa Community (EAC) Power Pool Agreement that calls on member states to connect electricity to each other. The EAC Power Pool is part of the wider Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP).

EAPP was originally midwived by DR Cong, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan in February 2005 and were later joined by Uganda, Djibouti and Tanzania, with view of easing access to electricity in Eastern Africa.

The EAPP countries have an estimated combined installed generation capacity of 32,319 megawatts, but the World Bank in its Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy report released last year ranked Ethiopia, Sudan (and Nigeria), as the three of the most populous energy deficit countries, with a total unserved population of 116 million people.

The EAPP/EAC interconnection protocol provides standards for technical planning and operation of the interconnected transmission system.

EAPP countries, excluding Djibouti, also form the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), the sole institutional framework for cooperation on sharing River Nile, on which nearly all hydropower projects in the region run.

Lucrative power trading potential

At the time of signing the EAPP framework, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Uganda were said to be the only countries with “the export potential.” Egypt, it was postulated, would not be a net importer or exporter of electricity or fuel (gas) while Djibouti, Kenya, Burundi, Sudan and Tanzania it was assumed, would import.

Currently Uganda has an installed generation capacity of 895 megawatts, and at the end of last year was exporting 51.1 megawatts to Kenya, 14 megawatts to Tanzania, and 0.27 megawatts to Eastern DR Congo.

And with the 600 megawatt Karuma and 183 megawatt Isimba dams scheduled to come on board later this year, Uganda is contemplating doubling power exports to Kenya and Tanzania and serving the South Sudan market.

Power trading is not an entirely new phenomenon and as things look now even looks more lucrative in the future.

According to African Development Bank (AfDB), the first cross-border power trade dates back to the 1950s between DR Congo (then Zaire) and Zambia, then along came several other bilateral agreements.

The Southern Africa Power Pool (SAPP) was created in 1995, and is now said to be “most advanced power pool on the continent”, according to AfDB. West African states have the Western Africa Power Pool, established in 2001, the Central Africa Power Pool (CAPP) for Central African states formed in 2003 and the East African Power Pool (EAPP) formed in 2005.

Putting energy into investments

“Although all power pools are working hard to promote energy trade, the level of energy traded in 2009 ranges only between 0.2 per cent (in CAPP) and 7.5 per cent (in SAPP),” AfDB says.

Notwithstanding the list of challenges, AfDB says opportunities exist as well but the regions/countries must “mobilise investments for the physical intra-regional infrastructure: this would include strategising the mobilisation of domestic resources”.

The World Bank estimates that properly organised regional power trade could save US\$ 2 billion annually in costs and reduce the marginal costs of power by between 20 and 40 per cent for some countries, while at the same time reducing carbon emissions by 70 million tonnes annually.

The NBI and EAPP states have been actively implementing power generation and transmission projects for export across the region and some major transmission lines are said to be underway.

Ethiopia’s hydropower potential, currently with an installed generation capacity of 4,290 megawatts, is among the largest in Africa. The country already exports power to neighbouring Djibouti and Sudan, and recently signed power trading agreements with Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Yemen, as it fast-tracks completion of the 6,000 megawatts Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

According to Grania Rubomboras, the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program Coordination Unit (NELSAP CU), “Technically we are getting there” especially for the EAC countries that have a platform where they meet, discuss and harmonise issues”.

“But if all countries continue pursuing interconnection lines, especially between the haves and have nots, within no time the network will have expanded around the region,” Rubomboras told a journalist workshop organised by NBI in Addis Ababa early this year.

Faster connections

The East African Community Secretariat which works closely with the EAPP says “most of the interconnection projects are now progressing so fast that before 2020 all of EAPP’s members, except Libya and Egypt, will be interconnected by power exchange (trade). Libya and Egypt are already connected but the proposed link between Egypt and Sudan is now at the feasibility study stage.”

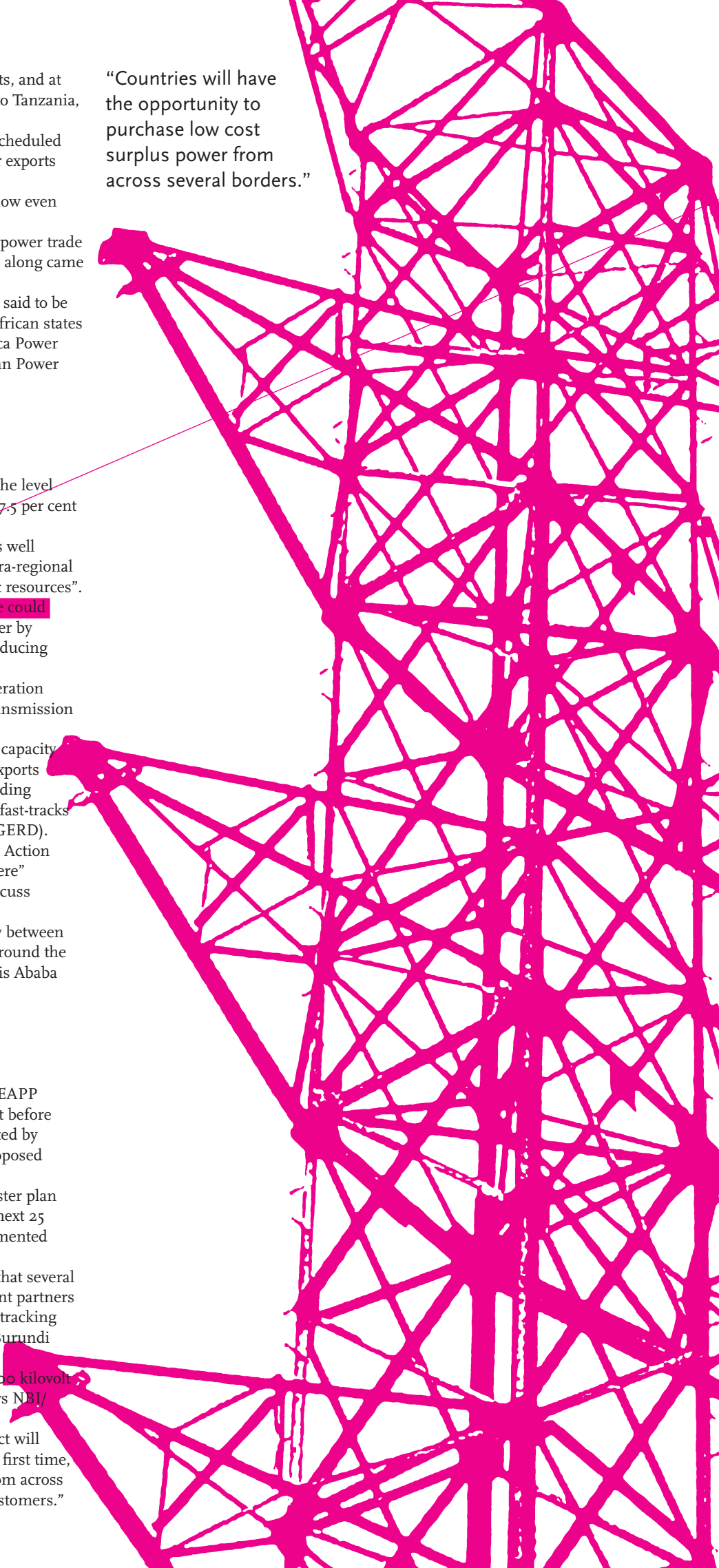
In January 2015 the EAPP council of ministers approved the EAPP master plan that contains a blueprint for power integration across the region over the next 25 years, and provides for the construction of transmission lines to be implemented between 2016 and 2017 and commissioned by 2020.

But a closer analysis of some of the listed interconnection lines shows that several cannot be completed by 2020. That notwithstanding, NBI and development partners including AfDB, JICA, European Union, among others, are currently fast-tracking a number of interconnection projects covering Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and DR Congo.

“Upon completion, the project will deliver 946 kilometre of 220 and 400 kilovolt transmission lines and 17 associated substations in the five countries,” says NBI/NELSAP.

“The realisation of the NELSAP interconnection of electric grids project will have huge economic implication in the entire East African region. For the first time, countries will have the opportunity to purchase low cost surplus power from across several borders and wheel it through several countries to their national customers.”

“Countries will have the opportunity to purchase low cost surplus power from across several borders.”





Importing energy and a higher quality of life

Rwanda plans on bidding farewell to the developing world by boosting its energy access.

By Jean Paul Mbarushimana
Kigali, Rwanda

“Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya have a plan to implement this project in the near future as power importation and sharing demand increases.”

The Government of Rwanda envisions a transition from being a developing country to a middle-income country by targeting 100 per cent electricity access by 2024. As part of its plan to boost capacity, Rwanda has signed a memorandum of understanding with Ethiopia to import 400 megawatts of electricity from Ethiopia in the medium term.

The Rwandan Ministry of Infrastructure showed that in 2015, the Rwanda Energy Group commissioned a 220 kilovolt transmission line interconnecting Uganda and Kenya, which is capable of transmitting over 300 megawatts once all of the bottle necks in Uganda and Kenya have been cleared.

Robert Nyamvumba, Energy Division Manager in the Ministry, told The Niles that Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya completed a detailed feasibility study in 2016 for future construction of a 400 kilovolt transmission line, which is capable of transmitting over 500 megawatts for regional sharing of power.

“Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya have a plan to implement this project in the near future as power importation and sharing demand increases,” said Nyamvumba.

The project is still in progress, as there are still many serious challenges facing the implementation of the project. Nyamvumba said the financial crisis of 2008-2010 heavily affected European contractors – some of them went into bankruptcy and Rwanda’s neighbouring countries faced serious issues with securing land at the project locations; slowing down the implementation progress regionally.

“A major challenge faced was the right of way (expropriation) challenges in the regional countries. Unlike Rwanda where the land laws are favourable to government, our neighbouring countries have faced serious issues with securing land at the project locations.”

Regional engagement required

The government of Rwanda hopes to be able to start importing and sharing power from Ethiopia by early 2019 based on proposed interim solutions and advancements in resolving most of the contractual and right of way issues, but some economic experts identified that for Rwanda to import energy from Ethiopia, it will also require regional engagement, particularly with Uganda and Kenya, and joint regional energy sector planning, along with investment in a highly efficient grid infrastructure.

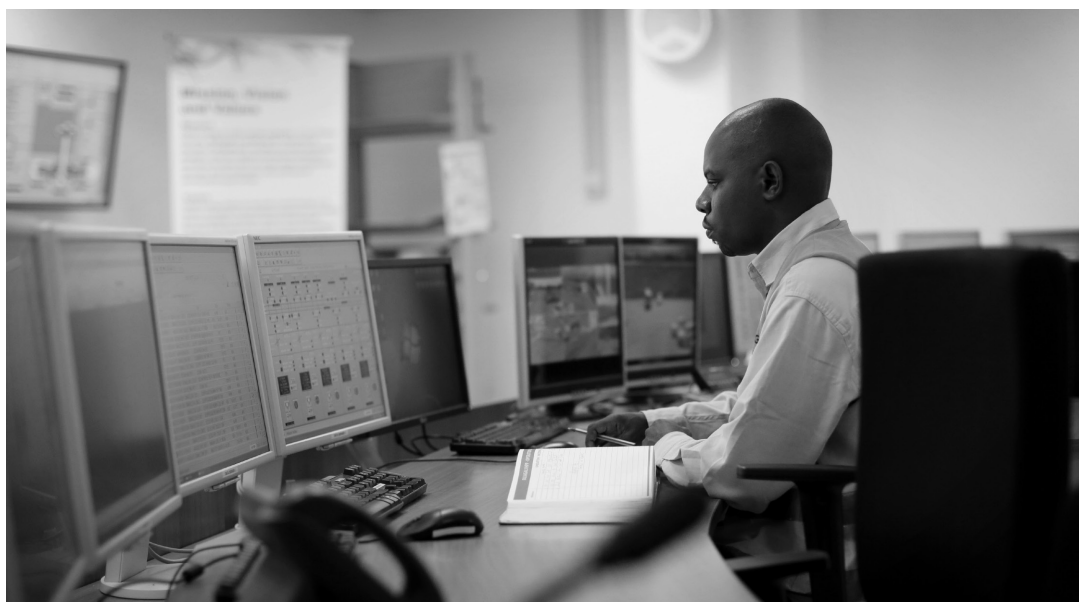
Economic analyst, Teddy Kaberuka, said: “The power will be coming from Ethiopia, of course it will cross Kenya, it will cross Uganda to reach to Rwanda, so **it needs a collaboration and commitment from the other countries.**”

On the other side, Rwanda’s population surrounding the project locations is enjoying some opportunities brought on by the grid infrastructure construction. There are various benefits ranging from affordable electricity costs, employment, as well as the strengthening of a stable national grid system.

Gashongore Pierre, who lives near the Kinyaga Transmission Line Station said: “When they started constructing this station, we were involved in it, preparing the ground to fix some grids. When the project is accomplished, we hope to have enough electricity with lower costs than today, and more stability, as the existing one often fails and we sometimes have no electricity.”

Currently Rwanda has a total installed capacity of over 2012 megawatts. The country is endowed with natural resources, including hydro, solar, and methane gas. Based on government data, Rwanda’s national electrification rate has reached 41 per cent (11 per cent off-grid, 30 per cent on-grid). Over seven million people still lack access to electricity and the high cost of energy has affected the country’s competitiveness in industry and exports.

One of the workers in the control room at the Bujagali hydroelectric power station in Uganda.



Climate change's imprint on the Nile Basin

From dried up streams in Uganda to poor rice farmers in Egypt's Nile Delta, climate change has had dire effects on Nile Basin countries.

By Asmaa Nassar
Cairo, Egypt

Climate change and increasing human activity alongside the River Nile threatens this life-sustaining resource.

By 2050, around a billion people will live in the countries through which the Nile and its tributaries flow. That alone will put enormous stress on the water supply.

Governments are faced with challenges in food resources in the region where the economy and the lives of people depend on agriculture, livestock keeping, fishing, not to mention hydraulic power as the main resource for development.

Uganda, for instance, is richly endowed with natural water bodies, and fisheries play a very important role as a basis for subsistence and commercial livelihood. Lake Victoria is by far the largest, and economically most significant, of the national fisheries. However, other large lakes, including George, Edward, Albert, and Kyoga, along with the River Nile and a great variety of swamps and streams, also contribute substantially to the annual national catch, constituting a significant part of the country's GDP.

In South Sudan, the Nile is a primary medium of transportation for goods and passengers in the Bahr-al-Jabal and Bahr-al-Ghazal rivers.

In **Ethiopia**, the country which has the largest number of tributaries, the Blue Nile remains the biggest source of hydroelectric power.

Climate warming models provide diverging pictures of future river flows in the Nile.

In Egypt, everyday life and development are fundamentally shaped by the Nile, the vein which gives life to the country.

Scientists agree that the Nile is about to become more unpredictable. Climate change, as a consequence of global warming driven by carbon dioxide build-up in the atmosphere, will overall mean that more rain will fall and flow down the water courses that feed the Nile system.

Computer simulations, reported in Nature Climate Change, also predict that under the notorious "business as usual scenario" in which humans go on exploiting fossil fuels, there will be substantially fewer "normal" years, and more years of either devastating flood or withering drought.

The consequences would differ in magnitude from one country to another, according to the size of its water-dependent economic activities, such as power generation, agriculture, breeding livestock and fishing. The more diverse such activities are in a country, the lesser the implications of climatic changes are.

Water shortages

The Nile Basin traverses the largest number of countries of any basin in Africa and changes in the timing and availability of water under climate change may lead to tension, insecurity and management problems.

Kenya's Amboseli National Park, has seen its temperature rise dramatically in the past twenty years.



Climate warming models provide diverging pictures of future river flows in the Nile from a 30 per cent increase to a 78 per cent decrease.

The Nile Delta is the final stretch of the Nile, a landscape of fertile soil, farms and a constellation of towns and cities where the river fans out and drains into the Mediterranean. It is one of the largest river deltas in the world and is home to almost half of Egypt's population.

In the delta region, saltwater intrusion into coastal freshwater resources (including aquifers) is likely to increase as a result of sea-level rise due to climate warming and would further reduce the availability of freshwater, according to the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF).

"Climate change may make Egypt drier and warmer, intensifying its dependency on irrigation. In light of the high and growing human demands for water and water-intensive agriculture on the banks of the Nile, reduced water flows under climate change would be catastrophic," a WWF report states.

Egypt is already one of the largest grain importers in the world, considering total imports of wheat, maize and oilseeds last year "amounted to more than 24 million tons", according to Hussein Gadain, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative in Egypt. "Imports are expected to rise due to the population increase and the limited arable land and water resources."

Ahmed Abdel-Monem and others from Beheira and Kafr el-Sheikh in the Nile Delta say that they have noticed and felt the effects of the water shortage in recent years. According to them it became evident when the government enforced the recycling of agricultural run-off waters, as well as the government's law to minimise fish farms in the north of Egypt.

But the amount of water is not the only problem. Egypt's available water is increasingly becoming contaminated with untreated agricultural and residential waste. With these factors combined, the United Nations estimates critical water shortages in Egypt by 2025.

Improving basin resilience

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was established on February 22, 1999, to provide a forum for consultation and coordination among the Basin states for the sustainable management and development of the shared Nile Basin water and related resources for win-win benefits.

NBI today is an intergovernmental partnership of ten Nile Basin countries, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Eritrea participates as an observer.

The "NBI 10 year Strategy" for the period 2017-2027 provides the long-term direction for NBI, defines the goals the institution will work towards and expounds on its contribution. It also elaborates how NBI will be strengthened to efficiently and effectively deliver on its mandate.

The strategy highlights six goals, which contribute to addressing key development challenges in the Nile Basin. One of the goals is "improving basin resilience to climate change impact".

"Nile Basin countries recognise the urgent need to implement effective adaptation measures that take into consideration a basin wide context; given that impacts of climate change are transboundary in nature and solutions to impacts in one country could lie in another country," the strategy paper reads.

To strengthen the search for transboundary solutions to the impacts of climate change, the NBI for example plans to establish and maintain a climate information service; support joint analysis, planning and implementation of climate resilient interventions; and improve and promote regional policy and planning frameworks for effective climate change adaptation at regional and national levels.

Climate change is only one of many challenges which requires more basin-wide cooperation. Nile Basin countries need to prepare for the likely adverse climate change impacts, by building common strategies to prepare for and cope with climate change – towards which the countries hardly contributed.

"Nile Basin countries recognise the urgent need to implement effective adaptation measures."





theniles.org/
en/
articles/
society/
20649

Water hyacinth: both beauty and beast

They appear beautiful on the surface, but fast-growing water hyacinth threaten to cause widespread damage to biodiversity, fishing, and even hydroelectric power.

By Tesfa-Alem Tekle
Bahir-Dar, Ethiopia

“The major challenge is that the weed naturally revives itself very quickly.”

Common Water Hyacinth covers Lake Victoria at the port in Kisumu, Kenya.

Lake Tana, Ethiopia’s largest and Africa’s second largest lake is gradually being overrun by an aquatic weed – the water hyacinth.

The plant, locally known as Emboch, has already covered 50 thousand hectares of the lake, according to Bahir-Dar University.

Since the water hyacinth was discovered at Lake Tana in 2012, by biologist Dr. Ayalew Wonde, fragmented efforts have been underway to control the plant’s spread.

The Amhara Regional government and other concerned parties have been started large scale campaigns to mobilise communities in the affected areas.

Although a huge amount of human labour and money was utilised over the past years to clear the weed, it continues to spread at an alarming rate, according to Bahir-Dar University Research Centre.

Dr. Kefyalew Temesgen, a biologist and researcher on Lake Tana explains why the ongoing efforts have failed to make a significant impact in controlling the spread of the water hyacinth.

“The major challenge is that the weed naturally revives itself very quickly. The water hyacinth reproduces itself in three weeks or less, depending on the available nutrients in the lake,” said Kefyalew.

“Unless the hyacinth is rooted out, ground, and burnt down quickly, it will easily reproduce itself and the current traditional way of using human labour to remove the weed will make it very difficult to fully eradicate it,” he added.

Weed damaging biodiversity

When left unchecked, the aquatic weed quickly forms thick solid, impenetrable floating mats that block the circulation of air, water, as well as sunlight to the water’s surface, thus adversely affecting the water ecology.

Researchers recently revealed that the weed also saps available oxygen from the water and obstructs the photosynthetic activities of under water plant species and flora, thereby damaging the biological diversity of the lake.

Fishermen residing on the Fogera side of the lake, in the Amhara regional state of South Gondar Zone, confirmed that many species of fish and other aquatic life forms in the lake are declining in number and could eventually face extinction as the spread of the weed continues at an alarming rate.

Ashebir Belay, 42, is a resident of the Fogera locality and has been fishing on Lake Tana since he was a child. He says he has seen a critical decline in the biodiversity of the lake during the past few years, which researchers attribute to the weed’s adverse effect on the ecosystem.

“The livelihoods of communities have been affected following the invasion of the dangerous weed. We use Lake Tana as our primary source of food and transportation,” said Ashebir who supports his six-member family by fishing in Lake Tana.

“The resources of Lake Tana are seriously obstructed by the weed,” said Ashebir. “The number of fish have drastically declined and my day job doesn’t pay enough.”

Wetlands into dry lands

According to Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), a German NGO working on sustainability and conservation in the region, about two million Ethiopians depend on the resources of the lake, as well as on the wetlands and ranches for their livelihoods.

“The large water hyacinth mat has destroyed the ecology,” said Zinabu Demse, a farmer in Dembiya locality. “The wetlands have now turned into dry lands.”

Recent studies indicate that the thirsty weed has contributed to a further contraction in the lake’s area, as it speeds up the evaporation of water from the lake’s wetlands.

The affected areas of Dembiya province on the western side of the lake are home to thousands of fishermen, farmers, and breeders who depend on the lake for their livelihoods.

Fishermen and fish traders further say that the dense floating hyacinth mats have damaged their fishing canoes and boats with outboard engines.

“They are hindering tourists’ excursion activities to the island monasteries,” added Amanuel Hailu, a tourist guide who lives in Bahir-Dar city. Lake Tana is a world heritage site known for its rich biodiversity and significant cultural heritage.

Problems for hydroelectric power

A number of Ethiopians agree that the situation on Lake Tana has implications for regional hydro-politics as the lake is notably the head waters to the Blue Nile River, which flows to downstream countries, particularly Sudan and Egypt.

Studies have warned that unless the expansion of the water hyacinth is halted rapidly, it will continue expanding toward the southern tip of Lake Tana and will then invade the Blue Nile from its source and eventually to the reservoir of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a multi-billion-dollar power plant project, which Ethiopia is building along the Nile River, near the Sudanese border.

Merga Biru, an environmentalist says downstream countries, particularly Egypt and Sudan should also join the campaign to eradicate the invasive weed.

“Unless concerted and collective efforts leading to the ultimate eradication of the weed are taken, it will eventually affect the GERD and will disrupt the flow of the Nile River,” said Biru.

Same lake, different catch

Fishing techniques vary between the Ugandan and DRC sides of Lake Edward. A unified approach would benefit both sides.

By Tuver Wundi
Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo

“The quality of fish from Lake Edward’s Ugandan side is highly appreciated in the Congolese market,” said Pascal Makengere, a resident of Vitshumbi in DRC. “This opens enormous opportunities for fishermen from neighbouring villages. God has blessed the waters of Uganda,” he remarked.

Harvesting fish from the DR Congo side is different from harvesting on the Ugandan side, confirms Jean de la Croix Kambere, Programme Assistant in charge of Lake Edward at the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature.

Riparian communities depend directly on Lakes Edward and Albert for their livelihood. Small-scale agriculture is one of the main economic activities in this area, but fishing remains the first and main activity of these communities.

It is estimated that around 73 per cent of the basin’s population depends on fishing for its livelihood. More than 50 per cent of those associated with fishery are women who are primarily engaged in processing and selling fish.

Like Makengere, many Congolese fishermen believe that the difference between harvesting on both sides is due to the fact that Ugandan waters are richer. This is true, but the causes of this apparent wealth are more of a human affair than a divine one.

Kambere explains that “Congolese fishermen use non-compliant nets, which are under 4.5 inches and often use nets that measure between 3.8 and 4.2 inches.” On the Ugandan side of the lake, fishermen respect the rules. They use nets that don’t catch small fish, so they have time to grow and breed, leading to more and bigger fish in the long run.

Kambere, and many of his colleagues say it is important to harmonise the regulation of fishing practices between the two Nile Basin countries.

Overfishing

Fish stock assessment studies have indicated that fishery on the Congolese side has a production potential of 14,000 to 16,000 tonnes per year. However, years of violence in the region have caused the fisheries regulatory mechanisms to collapse.

The lack of regulation, population growth, and poverty have added to overfishing. The lack of alternative livelihoods means that thousands of unemployed people in riverside communities turn to fishing.

On the Ugandan side of the lake a similar trend has evolved. One could observe a significant increase in the number of fishermen and fishing boats in recent years. Between 2011 and 2013, the number of fishing vessels working on the lake increased from 330 to 729, according to a 2015 report.

Fishermen are responding and adapting to the current situation of low fish stocks by adopting new fishing methods to increase catches. The most common fishing method is “salsio or luzira”, where fishermen stay on the lake for up to two weeks and fish day and night using illegal fishing gear. This method increases overfishing and therefore the quality and quantity of caught fish continues to decrease.

Solution: Work in harmony

The main causes of the depletion of fish stocks on the DR Congo side, but also more and more on the Ugandan side, are the degradation of the environment, the weak application of regulations, and the lack of harmonisation of fishery laws. All these aspects make the management of fishery resources in the basin complex. Yet there are opportunities that can support the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

It is crucial, experts say, that each country applies strict regulations that allow the conservation of fish stocks and put an end to destructive fishing practices.

For example, that fishing nets must correspond to criteria that do not allow the fishing of small fish. Another example would be to limit the number of fishing boats and fishermen per day. This would mean less work and would require decision makers to provide alternative income-generating activities.

Harmonising laws between neighbouring countries also remains a challenge, as there is no visible indication of the international border between Uganda and the DRC in the lake waters. It is a major source of conflict with law enforcement officials on both sides of the border.

Fishermen unknowingly on the “wrong” side of the border, are usually arrested and their fishing gear confiscated. Fishing methods are also a source of conflict between fishermen targeting different species of fish.

The absence of synchronised closure periods means that Congolese fishermen go to Uganda’s waters, causing conflicts in the fishing areas.

“God has blessed the waters of Uganda.”

theniles.org/
en/
articles/
society/
20650



Same lake, different catch: fishing techniques vary at Lake Edward.



One region, many different ways of learning

How colonisation and other factors prevented an interconnected educational system in the Nile Basin.

By Elzahraa Jadallah
Khartoum, Sudan

T

hough Nile Basin countries share the same river, there isn't much sharing in the field of education. Between language barriers, political tensions and different curricula, students find it hard to continue their studies within the region. Students end up losing time, face difficulties in registering, or struggle with a foreign language.

Divisions dating back to colonialism

"Education, according to the colonial heritage, created a language barrier," said Professor Omer M. Ali, International Relations Expert at University of Khartoum. "So we find most likely in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, a French education. In Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, a British education.

These languages are official in these countries even for media and formal treatments. Ethiopia, Eritrea and South Sudan are also English, and it is Arabic in Egypt and Sudan." Professor Ali notes that due to these challenges, it is sometimes easier for university students to continue studying abroad than within the Nile Basin region.

There is also the issue of movement of populations from one country to another. The visa is very difficult to obtain and it is expensive. "If it's not easy with French speaking countries, we at least need to (make it easier) with English speaking ones. We have not made any effort in this regard. The leaders in these countries need to combat illiteracy and spread education."

"My experience studying side by side with girls from different African countries was very useful."

Political differences

"I think relations between Nile Basin countries in the education field are very weak," said Dr. Asmaa M. Jumaa, social worker in El Neelain University. "The political relations – Sudan and Egypt are an example," she said, adding that decades ago, the effect of politics wasn't as intense as it is currently.

Cairo University in Khartoum (now El-Neelain) once played an important role in a Sudanese-Egyptian educational collaboration, yet after the nationalisation of the university, things have not been the same. There are still Sudanese students in Egypt despite the difficult regulations influenced by a political agenda and the increased number of educational options in Sudan, according to Prof. Ali.

In the past, both Egypt and Britain colonised Sudan and a number of students went to each of the countries; now there are differences in the systems, in addition to the political issues such as Halaib borders and Nile waters; which caused complex registration. Due to security and political restrictions, students prefer to go to other English-speaking African, European and American countries for graduate studies."

"We just received a proposal from China, which is very different and far away, yet we are willing to make a mutual exchange program in the universities," said Professor Ali. "Why can't we do that within

our region?" he wondered. Professor Ali stressed the importance of countries reaching out to their neighbours to facilitate movement.

When studying across a border does work

Annsimon Emil, an Egyptian, second year student at Sudan's Afhad University's School of Management said: "I think there aren't many relations between Nile Basin countries in the education field. Education in Egypt is totally different from education in Sudan, and I think it's better in Sudan."

"My experience studying side by side with girls from different African countries was very useful," said Emil, "as it teaches me how to deal with various types of people. This experience lets you connect with people and make new friends. I am planning to work in Sudan after graduation."

Allowing educators to make changes

"All these countries are trying to adapt to a new system, a more successful one, but from my understanding and my nine years teaching experience, every time they try to move from a colonial system to a new one, they find it challenging," said Mr. Y, a Ugandan teacher who has taught at all school levels in Sudan.

"We need to put this issue in the hands of professionals," he said. "Right now these decisions are being made by politicians, and they are being pushed by foreign powers."

Radio as a community builder

How media helps refugees integrate in West Nile.

F

or more than 21 years, refugees from South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo have lived peacefully alongside Ugandans in West Nile. It is common to find repeat refugees who have fled to Uganda when fighting breaks out in their home countries.

Refugees in Uganda enjoy free health facilities and public schools. They are allowed to work and conduct business. The Ugandan borders are open to refugees and each day 500 people enter Uganda fleeing conflict, mostly from DR Congo and South Sudan. UNHCR's chief Filippo Grandi praised Uganda's refugee programme as one of the best in the world when he visited Uganda earlier this year.

But there is another factor helping refugees from South Sudan and DR Congo integrate into Uganda: radio.

On Wednesday evenings, refugees can tune into Radio Pacis for the "Refugee Hour" where presenter Ayikobua Noel discusses the concerns of refugees by airing vox pops and interviews with refugees living in settlements. An influx of phone calls usually follows and discussions and recommendations on how to improve the livelihood of refugees living in the region are talked about.

Radio stations like Rainbow FM will soon start airing via the internet to reach out to Ugandans in the diaspora of West Nile origin and refugees whose relatives live abroad.

"To expand our coverage, we began by installing a new transmitter and improved our antenna," Denis Ocuna, the station manager of Rainbow Radio told The Niles.

"This helped us go from just covering a radius of 70 kilometres to covering the entire West Nile. Once the Internet is working faster, we shall start broadcasting online."

"Once the Internet is working faster, we shall start broadcasting online."

Programmes that promote business

Radio Paidha, based in Zombo, airs "Cross-Border Mix". During this show, presenter Omirambe Wod Angal hosts various entrepreneurs and officials to discuss market trends. Wod also highlights commodity prices, alerts about the various dates for market days in Uganda and Congo and shares the currency exchange rates for the week.

The programme also promotes business between Uganda, Congo and South Sudan. "The exchange rate alerts are very helpful to our listeners," Omirambe says. "This is because our currency markets are not fully regulated yet a lot of people come in through the border and need to exchange currency. This is one reason this programme was created," he said.

DR Congo is also expanding its radio coverage. Stations like La Colombe FM and Ndrele FM have broadened their coverage to reach Uganda and are also broadcasting in Ugandan languages.

West Nile fan clubs have managed to integrate all the three communities. Radio stations hold fan club games. The radio fans, locals, and refugees gather at a sports field and cheer on as their teams go to battle on the football field. Radio fans also get to meet their celebrated radio presenters.

But the real results of the media integration between the three countries is that people are beginning to look at each other as brothers. Intermarriages are common and refugees have joined the Ugandan community.



theniles.org/
en/
articles/
society/
20652



theniles.org/
en/
articles/
society/
20651

Left: A mosaic of cultural, linguistic, religious and historical backgrounds has prevented an interconnected educational system in the Nile Basin.

Right: Radio is uniquely positioned to bring communities together and foster positive dialogue for change.



Contributors

