



# Newsletter

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## Nile Basin Discourse: Where we are...

The Nile Basin is characterised by high levels of poverty, under development, marginalisation of women, environmental degradation, population boom, child insecurity and crisis of rural development. The revived Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) has been up and operational now for almost a year networking civil society organisations in the ten riparian countries of the Nile basin to address these important issues. NBD has its main objective of promoting sustainable and equitable development, poverty reduction and cooperation among all stakeholders especially civil society.

Institutionally the NBD desk is now re-established and fully functional, all the Nile Discourse Forums (NDFs) have been revitalized, and there is ongoing discourse information and exchange. So far, six NDFs have managed to register i.e. Sudan, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi. Some of the NDFs have also developed their own websites such as Egypt, Rwanda, and Sudan all to compliment the NBD Desk website. The layout of the NBD website has been changed and activity reports are regularly being posted.

In terms of visibility and awareness raising, Rwanda, Uganda, and Sudan have also embarked on producing newsletters for their local communities. Posters, stickers and documentaries on the Nile have also been produced.



NBD participants who attended the Leadership and Policy Engagement training in Nairobi

At a regional level, there have been quite a number of activities that the NBD have been engaging the NBI in like the Nile Day, a regional lawyers' workshop on the Nile treaties, the Nile elders meeting, the Nile media network, 'Women on the Nile' workshop, the Nile Development forum, public consultation and stakeholder involvement workshops, and others at local level.

At the moment, the NBD Desk is in the process of establishing a strategy to take NBD forward through 2007 and beyond, which was discussed at the steering committee meeting late May in Cairo, Egypt.

## News & Events

The 15th Annual Nile Council of Ministers Meeting is taking place in Entebbe on the 24th-25th of June. The theme this year is "Growing cooperation through Joint Actions". This relates to the prevailing intensified efforts to realise initialisation of implementation of SAPs investment projects and also to improve coordination and networking among countries, programmes and projects.

**Our Newsletter is a quarterly update of activities and opinions from the Nile Basin civil society organisations.**

**The Nile Basin Discourse is an organisation that collates the voices of civil society organisations within countries where the Nile Basin Initiative is operational.**

## National Discourse Forums (NDF) updates

### Burundi

The Burundi NDF has completed phase one on the establishment of the forum successfully with the coordinator, finance and administration and a librarian on board. The forum has embarked on phase two activities of knowledge and communications by recruiting two consultants to produce an audiovisual documentary on environmental challenges in the Nile basin, and has established a national resource centre.



Tree planting exercise as part of the Nile day celebrations in Burundi

The forum has had quite a number of consultative meetings with stakeholders at the beginning of phase two. The coordinator had meetings with representatives of NBI from NTEAP and CBSI projects with a purpose of finding synergies for cooperation.

The Forum held its general assembly on the 27th of January with a participation of fifty representatives from member organizations. The general assembly adopted the following decisions:

- Activity reports from 2004-2006
- Internal regulations

The BNDF broadcasted the produced documentary on national television and embarked on reproducing 100 copies of the same on DVD to be distributed to association members of the BNDF and other stakeholders.

The BNDF also broadcasted radio and TV spots aired in the media to enhance cooperation of the forum with other development partners.

### Rwanda

After receiving the first installment of phase two funds on knowledge and communications the Rwanda NDF (RNDF) has embarked on quite a number of activities, including establishing its resource centre, procuring and setting up equipment for the resource centre e.g. furniture, computers and software and installing internet connection.

Library material bought, cover a wide range of developmental issues e.g. lands, environment, agriculture, zoology, water etc

RNDF held consultative meetings with the country coordinator for Confidence Building and Stakeholder Involvement (CBSI), with the main objective of the meetings being identifying ways of implementing a more collaborative mechanism between the two organizations. It was agreed that RNDF and CBSI would work together in the areas of awareness raising, public media campaigns, and workshops on the Nile reporting and find ways of involving NTEAP projects.

In addition, the RNDF was involved in the regional organization of the Nile Day celebrations held on the 22nd February 2007.

RNDF has its own website up and running and can be found at [www.nbdfwanda.org.rw](http://www.nbdfwanda.org.rw). Four issues of the RNDF newsletters have been produced highlighting the NDF objectives, mission, on-going activities, membership and the CCI involvement.

### Ethiopia

The Ethiopian NDF (EtNDF) in a bid to strengthen its institutional base has procured equipment for the office and secured space from the CCI, Christian Relief Development Association (CRDA), to establish a resource centre.

A lot of the material in the resource centre has been acquired by soliciting for free material from organisations that deal with environmental and development issues and from embassies in Ethiopia.

In a bid to increase its visibility, the EtNDF has produced a brochure highlighting its work and areas of specialisation.

EtNDF has conducted public debates on issues concerning water resources utilization in general and Nile water resources in particular which were aired on Ethiopian Television.

The National Nile Youth Network was launched through an EtNBDF conducted national conference with representatives of youth associations in Ethiopia on March 9-10, 2007 in Addis Ababa. The conference aimed at enhancing awareness among the Youth and establishing the National Nile Youth Network.

EtNBDF is now planning to conduct a workshop with media, academia and research institutions to enhance awareness among these stakeholders. The workshop aims at mainstreaming the Nile issue within media networks, schools, and research institutions. It is hoped that this will aid in influencing the NBI projects and programs as well as national Government's water-related policies and strategies.

The EtNBDF has been engaged with the NBI / Water Resources Planning and Management Project of ENSAP, CBSI and Eastern / Southern African actors within the European Commission Economic Agreement negotiations. It continues to develop good relations with the Ministry of Water Resources in Ethiopia.

## World Water Day 2007

The international observance of World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations General Assembly designated 22 March of each year as the World Day for Water by adopting a resolution. This world day for water was to be observed starting in 1993, in conformity with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. States were invited to devote the Day to implement the UN recommendations and set up concrete activities as deemed appropriate in the national context.

The 15<sup>th</sup> World Water Day celebration was marked world wide on March 22, 2007 with the theme 'Coping with water scarcity'.

### Rwanda

The Rwandan Minister of State for Water and Mineral Resources, Prof. Munyanganizi Bikoro, has urged Rwandan nationals to conserve nature through the proper use of the natural resources and encouraged investors to invest in proper use of water especially for income generating activities. He was officiating at the International Water Day Celebrations on 22nd March held at SAVE in Butare as the chief guest.



Rwandan traditional dancers at the Nile Day celebrations in Kigali

The highlight of the day was the launch of the effort that has been made towards the distribution of clean water to Gisagara and Nyaruguru districts under the joint partnership between the governments of Rwanda and Belgium. The government of Rwanda in its vision 2020, targets to avail clean and safe water to at least 80% of its population by the year 2010. So far clean and safe water is being supplied to the residents of the southern province. The Belgian government vowed to help in supplying clean water to at least 200,000 residents of Huye, Gisagara and Nyaruguru districts estimated at a total cost of 5.86 million Euros over a period of four years and will be realized in three phases:

- i. Technical rehabilitation of water sources;
- ii. Implement and sensitize the participants in the execution of the project; and finally,
- iii. Construction of public sanitary and hygiene facilities in the three mentioned districts.

The ceremony also included various donor and international organisation representatives from World Bank, World Food Program, Food and Agricultural Organization and Coordinator of PEAMER (Rural Water Supply Project). Other partners of Nile Basin Initiative, Nile Basin Discourse Forum in Rwanda, and Electrogaz were also represented.

### Kenya

In Kenya, the national celebrations were held in

Garissa whereas the Lake Victoria South regional celebrations were held at Kombewa-Nyalik Primary School, Kisumu District where KNDF participates.

The regional celebration sought to not only mark the World Water Day but also to create awareness on available water resources and management as well as sensitize the local communities and other stakeholders on the activities and programs of key stakeholder institutions in the Kenyan water sector.

KNDF alongside the Lake Victoria South Water Services board, Water Resources Management Authority (WRMA) and other institutions organized and participated in the celebrations.

The celebrations were marked with the official opening of the Yao Kadongo Community Dam, a tour of the rainwater roof catchments supported by WRMA, speeches and entertainment.

The Yao Kadongo dam is a community water dam constructed by the local communities of Kadongo in Kombewa. The dam is unique in that, as an initiative of the local communities, it was constructed through partial voluntarism and a work for pay formula. The community volunteered half of the total man hours used to complete the construction done using simple tools. The dam measures approximately 100 square meters and is fenced to prevent open access to both people and cattle. Within its annex, there is a tap water collection and cattle drinking point.

Water flows to the collection point by gravity. Within the dam area, exists an agro-forestry, horticulture and fruit's farm, and 3 fish ponds. The dam is a demonstration of good collaboration between Civil Society Organizations and government authorities.

### Ethiopia

EtNDF together with the Ministry of Water Resources, FAO, WaterAid Ethiopia, RiPPLE and InterMo Sweden celebrated the World Water Day with speeches, children's songs, photo exhibitions, and a workshop.



Ethiopian children singing at the World Water Day

## Tekeze-Atbara Basin Trans-boundary Civil Society Engagement Workshop, Kassala, Sudan. 18-21 March 2007

The Tekeze-Atbara Basin Trans-boundary civil society engagement workshop took place in Kassala town (the capital of the state of Kassala) from the 18th to 21st March 2007 and was organised by Sudan National Discourse Forum (SNDF) in collaboration with the Ethiopia National Discourse Forum (EtNDF), the Eritrea NDF (ErNDF), the Egypt NDF (EgNDF) and funded by NBD and the Micro Grants Programme of the Nile Trans-boundary Environment Action Programme (NTEAP) of NBI.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to exchange ideas on ways in which to reduce poverty and improve resource governance and sustainable socio-economic development in the Tekeze-Atbara basin, as well as, to identify ways and means of ensuring the development of the resources of the basin in a sustainable and equitable way for prosperity, security and peace of its entire people.

The Kassala workshop was extremely significant from the point of view of sharing common vision and benefit distribution. For the first time in the history of the region, it brought together representatives of communities from Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan. These representatives reflected on the solutions to the multifarious problems in the region as citizens of the region. The workshop further signified that given the chance and forum, community representatives from conflict-ridden region, such as this particular region, can play crucial roles in bringing out peace by promoting shared vision and the ideas of benefit sharing.



Participants at the Kassala workshop, an NBD Challenge Fund activity - Sudan

The specific objectives of the workshop were;

1. To enhance awareness at the local level of the NBI and NBD, and to achieve greater stakeholder engagement in both;
2. To strengthen the engagement of the EgNDF, ErNDF, EtNDF and the SNDF in all sub-basin development processes under the NBI;
3. To improve community capacity to identify local needs and problems and to translate these into community action plans;
4. To build an 'alliance for change' between different stakeholders which would help to influence policies at local, national and regional levels; and
5. To forge a greater understanding among all ENSAP countries of the challenges facing developments in the Tekeze-Atbara basin, including opportunities for benefit sharing.

The workshop consisted of capacity building sessions and awareness raising activities amongst participants, identifying the socio-economic challenges facing communities in the basin, identifying issues of common trans-boundary concern and drafting an action plan for raising community awareness and capacity to engage the NBI in future development projects.

A number of resource persons were recruited to give background short presentations on key issues to enhance



Kassala workshop participants

the knowledge of the participants. These issues included the water resources of the Tekeze-Atbara Basin, the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in mapping the natural resources, land use planning and related problems, early warning systems, disaster mitigation, local coping mechanisms, conflict transformation and peace building, gender and social structures and the impact of refugees and displacement on the natural resources.

The participants engaged into working groups that identified problems in the Atbara-Tekeze basin and proposed solutions both at country level and as a joint management plan of the Basin.

Some of the important recommendations made were:

- The Nile countries within the (NBI) should focus on waging peace and development instead of war and conflicts over the resources.
- The three sub-basin countries should engage in formulation of trans-boundary projects to tackle reduction of poverty, environmental degradation, disaster management and joint community development.
- The need to tap into more water resources through proper water management and water harvesting, increase water storage capacities and construction of dams in upper Atbara River.
- The three sub-basin countries should exert joint efforts to formulate water policy and watershed management. Such policy will contribute to reduction of conflicts on water resources, ensure food security, reduce poverty, create stability and improve quality of livelihood. Furthermore, such policy will contribute to formulation of a balanced rural development.
- Development of coordinated programs by the eastern Nile countries to study issues like: River Sedimentation, Silt accumulation in dams and High Aswan Dam (HAD), soil erosion and deforestation.

The workshop was attended by 107 persons representing local communities from Ethiopia (13), Eritrea (8), Egypt (3) and Sudan (11), National NGOs, International NGOs, CSOs, Universities and Research

## !! Hot off the press !!

### NBI-CBSI Nairobi Declaration by Nile Basin country water partnerships and National Discourse Forums

12<sup>th</sup> June, 2007

Centres, Private Sector and Governmental Institutions. The participants also included representatives of EgNDF, ErNDF, EtNDF and SNDF and two representatives of the NBD Desk.



Participants joining in the traditional Sudanese sword dance

#### Background Info:

#### Atbara-Tekeze basin

The Atbara-Tekeze basin covers many small tributaries, the main two being Atbara & Setit (Tekeze). They join within the Sudan D/S AISHouak Area.

Tekeze river flows from the most remote source a distance of 1216km to the confluence with river Atbara, covers an area of 68,800km<sup>2</sup> Ethiopia, Sudan & Eritrea. Atbara Basin area above and below the confluence is 31,400km<sup>2</sup> and 43,600km<sup>2</sup> respectively.

Rainfall season is shorter than the Blue Nile Basin, with an average annual rainfall of 950 mm, although it generally dry from November to May. The Tekeze lies in a deep ravine a few hundred meters wide at the bottom, shut in by steep rocky hillsides.

The topography is rough and uneven with the highest point of the Atbara (Tekeze) Basin of about 3500m and an average level of 1750m. For the greater part of the Basin inside Sudan, it is well below the general level of the plain.

The climate is arid and the natural vegetation is sparse, with some acacia scrub, scattered bushes & Dom palms. The population along the river relies on livestock and irrigation.



A Declaration by participants of a regional Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) workshop on the policy and practice of public consultation and stakeholder participation was attended by key NBI project heads. Representatives of NBD, NDFs from the nine countries of the Nile basin (except Eritrea), the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and Country Water Partnerships (CWP) from the nine countries of the basin, agreed to adopt the declaration at the end of this workshop held at Safari Club Hotel, Nairobi.

There was a general consensus on the role of public consultation and stakeholders in the development process as an indispensable precondition for poverty eradication and generating social development. Consequently, there was unanimous approval by all the stakeholders to lobby their governments for full non-governmental stakeholder involvement in NBI operations.



NBI-CBSI stakeholder involvement workshop in Nairobi

Major commitments agreed on were improving communication and information sharing in the Nile Basin between NBI, NBD and GWP, improving on the capacity to follow up and through on previous workshops and Declarations, promoting interaction with Subsidiary Action Programs, and, formulating the Nile Basin Initiative public consultations framework strategy with the composition of Regional and national task forces to be completed by November 2007.

The workshop was attended by participants from Egypt, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, DRC, Burundi, Tanzania and Ethiopia with each country presenting their experiences and various issues relating to effective stakeholder involvement in the NBI.

#### Upcoming NBD Events

- Media training for regional journalists on how to report on the Nile and make the Nile Basin issues more interesting for their audiences.
- Nile documentary production on the 'Voices of the Nile'.

## Nile Day 2007

### Kigali

The Nile Day was celebrated for the first time by the Nile river basin countries on the 22nd February 2007 with the theme 'Enhanced cooperation on the Nile for peace and prosperity'.

22nd February was chosen as the Nile Day because historically this was the day when the 'Shared Vision' was adopted by the Nile Basin Initiative, NBI, to achieve sustainable social economic development through the equitable utilisation of and benefit sharing from common Nile Basin water resources.

The regional celebrations were marked in Kigali, Rwanda with H.E. President Paul Kagame officiating as the guest of honor. The celebrations were held in the middle of negotiations on the Permanent Cooperative Framework being reviewed by the Nile-Com at Prime Holdings- Kigali.

The Rwandan President urged the Nile-Com member countries to sign the cooperative framework agreement in order to establish mechanisms to help deal with the challenge of population growth in Africa, that is increasingly exerting pressure on the water resources.

President Kagame re-affirmed Rwanda's position and commitment for the success of the cooperative framework and urged all the Nile riparian states to enhance cooperation.



Dignitaries at the Nile Day celebrations in Kigali

He stated that Rwanda stood for cooperation and shared benefits for better investments in many socio-economic developments.

He urged members to strive for the establishment of a permanent commission that will manage the waters of the Nile in an equitable and sustainable way for the development of the 300 million people in the riparian countries, as the population is projected to double by 2025 and a mechanism needs to be in place to overcome the further pressure on water resources.

Participants were given tips on how to select targets, which included mobilizing for political commitment and resources.

David Grey of the World Bank, who also

represented development partners, pledged the Bank's support, especially in the negotiations.

Grey said that the World Bank has allocated one billion dollars for the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) programs in 2007 and 2008, which will also help in the completion of cooperation negotiations. NBI has been working as a transition institution for the last 8 years.

Nile Day is expected to raise awareness of the public regarding the NBI and how stakeholder countries can benefit from its projects

The Nile Com Chairperson and Minister of Water from Burundi, Ms. Audette Kaitesi expressed the importance of the Nile for the riparian people, and the ownership of the resource. She urged the celebrants to work towards effective cooperation for maximum benefit of the resource. She also recognized the role of the NBD, in ensuring that the civil society has a voice and can engage in NBI programs.

She called upon the negotiating committee to speed up negotiation processes of the cooperative framework which has been in place for almost 10 years.

### Sudan

The Sudanese National Discourse Forum (SNDF) and the Nile Trans-boundary Environment Program (NTEAP) co-financed the celebrations in Kosti town in the White Nile State (central Sudan). The SNDF, being a member of both the large and the core committees established to co-organise the Nile day celebrations, took an active role in all the preparatory stages.

The main celebrations in Kosti, which were carried out by the Kosti Local Discourse Forum (KLDF), consisted of a cleaning campaign that targeted the main drainage canal in the town. The open canal traverses the market place and is used as a dumping site for the market place. The KLDF, SECS branch members in Kosti, local authorities and over one hundred volunteers participated in the cleaning activity.

Through their public awareness campaign, SNDF conducted small discussion groups in the market place, aired radio programs and put up notices along the drainage requesting people not to dump their waste in the canal which drains in the White Nile.



Children dancing troupe that performed in Kassala

After signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, (SPLA) and the Sudanese government, a lot of returnees to the southern Sudan started using the River transport from Kosti to the towns and villages in the South. As a result, a returnees' camp has been established within the confines of the new port, River Port. To mark the Nile day along the port, SNDF conducted a tree planting exercise where over 100 shade trees were planted to provide shelter for the returnees.

KLDF also conducted a workshop on pollution of the White Nile in Kosti and the surrounding areas.

A special newsletter and a poster to celebrate the Nile Day were produced by SNDF. These, in addition to the SNDF brochure, were exhibited in the official celebrations that took place in the Ministry of Irrigation on the 22nd of February. The SNDF presented a paper on the relations between the NBD and the NBI and the future perspectives as part of the seminar that followed the exhibition.

## Kenya

The celebrations in Kenya were held in Busia town in the west of the country. The day was preceded by the pre-Nile day activities held on 21st February 2007 which were characterized by an exhibition of documentations from the NBI, Kenya National Discourse Forum (KNDF) and local schools and colleges.

This was followed by a tree planting exercise and a clean up exercise along a 1.5km stretch of the Kisumu-Busia road. The afternoon had a soccer match between Busia Polytechnic and St. Mathias Secondary School.

The second day of the celebration was a continuation of the exhibition and a tree planting exercise by the chief guest, the Busia District Commissioner. In his speech the chairman of KNDF, Dr. Philip Raburu, welcomed the idea of the Nile day celebrations and emphasized the need for the celebrations to be marked annually and urged key stakeholders to promote the ideals of the day among the community members throughout the year.

He challenged all the stakeholders of the Nile to embrace collaboration and sharing in their development initiatives to enhance peace amongst them.

## Egypt

Egypt celebrated the Nile day with very good representation from NBI, CBSI, NTEAP, Egyptian Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, National Water Institution, NGO Federation, local NDFs' and the media.

Presentations were made by celebrants with emphasis on the efforts that are being exerted for Nile Development, clarifying the obstacles that are being faced and the needed coordination and cooperation between all concerned parties to reach the ultimate goals.

Participants showed good intentions for cooperation to achieve development, and the presence of a variety of participants from different backgrounds enriched the dialogue.

The local NDFs from the 11 Egyptian Governorates attended the Celebration and exchanged their



Clean up exercise in Cairo, as part of a Nile Day celebration

experiences and work plans with representatives of the concerned parties with an aim of coordinating their work for future cooperation to implement development efforts in the Nile basin.

## Uganda

Uganda National Discourse Forum (UNDF) was a key participant at the national Nile Day Celebrations which were marked by a public dialogue on enhancing cooperation for peace and security. The UNDF chair, Professor Afunaadula, was the lead discussant.

Subsequently on the 26th of February, 2007, the UNDF held civil society Nile Day celebrations, at the source of the Nile in Jinja. The occasion was graced with the attendance of His Worship, the Mayor of Jinja and NBI, CBSI national project coordinator. The Mayor who officiated as the guest of honour, commended civil society for their role in advancing participation and cooperation amongst stakeholders to development.



Civil society in action: group discussions of stakeholders.

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# Opinions from the Nile Whose Cooperative Framework?

In February, Nile Day was celebrated amid much fanfare in Kigali. There was high expectation that a new basin-wide agreement might be signed between all Nile riparians, the result of years of difficult negotiation. This did not come to pass, and the basin population is left scratching its collective head and wondering why?

The Nile basin is home to some 150 million people, or a quarter of Africa's population. It is a key resource for much of this population, bringing benefits including water supply, fisheries, hydropower, crop production and navigation, to name but a few.

Since the late 1990s, the Nile basin countries have been developing a new initiative – the Nile Basin Initiative – to generate greater cooperation over joint development of the River Nile. One major stumbling block to greater cooperation has been the absence of a basin-wide legal document signed by all countries determining key development principles and directions.

The 'D3' negotiations that have run in parallel to the NBI have sought to fill this gap by coming up with a new 'Cooperative Framework'. This is what people were hoping might have been signed in Kigali. But precisely what would have been signed now, no-one knows. At present the document's contents remain a closely guarded secret – even from many parts of the NBI.

As civil society develops and emerges as a key force for better-connected development in the basin, bridging competing priorities of governments, peoples, cultures and economies, the question why the 'D3' negotiations have been held in secret and what the kind of document these negotiations are leading to, becomes more pressing. Is this the best way of developing a document that the basin population owns — as opposed

to governments alone? Is there greater collective wisdom out there that might be captured to strengthen the document's provisions? And how might the thornier issues such as the status of existing treaties — contentious as they are — be resolved through more collective effort, including the involvement of civil society?



Voices of the Nile peoples need to be heard

Fundamentally, the basin is owned by its peoples and it seems that the time is ripe for a more public debate on the nature of the document being negotiated. What are its principal provisions, potential pitfalls and what does it say about development more generally, within Nile countries? Why not make the document public as part of a process of consultation and not simply present it to the peoples of the Nile following closed-door negotiations?

**Dr Alan Nicol is a technical adviser to the Nile Basin Discourse. He has been working on Nile issues for more than 15 years.**

**For comment and feedback please email [alannic33@yahoo.com](mailto:alannic33@yahoo.com)**