

Beyond the GERD First Stage Filling

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Abstract

Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan have been negotiating about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) for close to 10 years. The negotiations between the three countries have been very difficult mainly because of Egypt's intransigence. Except the Declaration of Principle (DoP) signed in Khartoum, Sudan in 2015 by the heads of states of the three countries; an agreement has not been signed, yet. Even though it was reported that an agreement on most of the key elements have been accomplished, as of today, an agreement on the GERD filling and long-term operation of the dam has not been reached by the three countries. Ethiopia stated earlier the first stage of filling of the dam will commence in the coming rainy season in July 2020. The first stage of filling was completed on July 21, 2020, with 4.9 billion cubic meter storage, while AU sponsored talks were in session. The purpose of this paper is to explore and suggest future critical tasks and explore institutional mechanisms to manage the operation of GERD, and other watershed management strategies regardless of a signed agreement with the downstream countries.

Institutional framework that is focused on the Abay Basin is critical. This institution could have a mandate and authority to coordinate, enact and enforce regulations in the administrative regions that the basin drains. The institution could be structured to perform the following:

1. Develop basin wide soil and water management strategies,
2. Develop basin wide hydrology and hydraulic models,
3. Develop reservoir operation and management models,
4. Devise actionable tasks that could be implemented in the Regional, Zonal Administration level,
5. Explore financing options to undertake focused and targeted watershed management projects in the basin.

Creating an institution or restructure the existing institution that has a mandate to manage the Abay basin watershed and operation of the dam is essential. There are several critical Tasks that should be implemented for the long-term operations of the dam and for sustainable development in the basin and to prolong the service life of the dam. This paper explores technical, institutional framework, and basin wide holistic management strategies.

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