

Abstract Title: Why Egypt should have Sponsored the GERD?

Ephrem Mebrate¹

Abstract

The current total population of the Nile Basin countries is estimated at more than 547 million. Ethiopia has the largest population (112 million) closely followed by Egypt (104 million). By 2050, more than half of the population of these Nile Basin countries are estimated to be urbanized with middle-class life requiring more infrastructure mainly water and electricity. Currently, more than 60% of the Ethiopian population does not have access to electricity (i.e. 85 million population mainly in rural areas). As a result, their livelihood entirely depends on deforestation and collecting firewood for both cooking and as a source of light. The magnitude of deforestation, in search of firewood or charcoal combined with the encroachment on forest lands for agricultural and urbanization purposes, is causing a great threat to the sustainability of water sources in Ethiopia including the Blue Nile. While the demand for water exponentially grows in these two (and in fact, among other riparian) countries, the amount of water they get, and its sustainability over time, are at the greatest risk ever. This is due to the imminent risk of climate change or drought in the East African Countries. Egypt has never bothered about investing a penny in Ethiopia for the conservation of Blue Nile while they spend billions on destabilizing the horn. This is the greatest paradox especially considering the amount of Nile water from Ethiopia which is 85%, not mentioning the fertile soil. The source of Blue Nile, Tana lake, is under the verge of extinction due to an ever-expanding alien weed (water hyacinth) invasion which locally called “Emboch.” Ethiopian citizens, across the borders, have been manually and traditionally attempting to get rid of it, but all attempts seemed futile looking at the ever-expanding nature of the weed causing significant danger to the lake’s immense ecological and livelihood values. The Egypt diplomatic and intelligence community are keenly aware of the minor ethnic skirmishes in Ethiopia but has never been bothered about the danger posed to Blue Nile due to the weed, and also other related risks on Lake Tana. This shows the short-sighted and lack of thought-leadership on the Egyptian. This paper explores valid scientific reasons why the Egyptian should have sponsored the GERD instead of acting belligerently. Finally, the paper also examines arguments on GERD safety and filling process through reviews of expert works and suggestions.

¹ IRCWASH, mebrate@ircwash.org