

# NileNews

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## Nile Basin Regional HydroMet to promote efficient utilisation of water resources



Hydrologic calibration of a control hydromet site in Kenya

Below is an excerpt of an interview with the Head of Basin-wide Programme, Dr Abdulkarim Seid, on the implementation of the Regional HydroMet System in the Nile Basin.

**A** HydroMet System, whose full name is hydro-meteorological monitoring system, comprises the infrastructure – both software and hardware – and associated institutional setup for monitoring meteorological and hydrological parameters of a geographical area, such as a river basin.

[»» CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

**DID**  
you know?

The River Nile has an average discharge of 3.1 million litres (680,000 gallons) per second. Imagine 3.1 million bottles of water, each measuring one litre, available for use every second. This volume varies depending on the rainy and dry seasons.

Find out more: Nile Basin Water Resources Atlas: <http://atlas.nilebasin.org/treatise/groundwater-in-the-nile-basin/>

### »» INSIDE

Nile Basin Regional HydroMet to promote efficient utilisation of water resources	1
Message from the Executive Director	2
Both the Technical and Political tracks of NBI are key to realisation of benefits of Nile cooperation	2
Member States validate Ground Water Project in the Nile Basin	6
Kenya to host 27 <sup>th</sup> annual Nile Council of Ministers meeting	8
NBI makes high level presentation at the inaugural Ethiopia Water and Energy Week	9
Question and Answer with former Executive Director, Eng Innocent Ntabana	10
Climate Services for Adaptive Water Resources Management in the Nile Basin project gets nod from AfDB	11
Enhancing capacity on climate change analysis in the Nile Basin	12
NBI@20: Highlights of achievements	13
Share your story - 20 years NBI	14

## Both the Technical and Political tracks of NBI are key to realisation of benefits of Nile cooperation



**T**he Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was established by the Nile Basin countries on February 22, 1999, to work towards attaining a Shared Vision Objective – *to achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilisation of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources*. NBI was established as a transitional institution to create a conducive environment for Nile cooperation and to build a culture of dialogue as well as trust and confidence. The ultimate goal is an all-inclusive permanent legal and institutional framework for Nile cooperation that is the Nile River Basin Commission.

The NB Secretariat based in Entebbe, Uganda together with the two investment programmes offices namely, the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Programme Coordination Unit (NELSAP CU) based in Kigali, Rwanda are responsible for implementing NBI's technical cooperation track. The latter focusses on providing a platform for cooperation as well as empowering Member States and the people to effectively manage their shared water resources through capacity building, development of scientific tools and

generation of policies and knowledge. This is in addition to assisting Member States to prepare joint bankable investment projects spanning from hydropower generation, power interconnection and trade, watershed management, irrigated agriculture and the adoption of international best practice in social and environmental management.

Running parallel to the technical cooperation track is the political/legal track pursued by the Member States and whose focus is the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA). Upon ratification by the Member States, the CFA will enable the establishment of the Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC), which would enhance Nile cooperation if all countries are part of the Commission. This therefore calls for an all-inclusive CFA, and to attain the latter will require Member States to discuss in good faith and with an open mind and flexibility in order to come to an understanding on the unresolved issues..

Twenty years since 1999, commendable progress has been made on the technical track. The NBI platform has contributed to the culture of dialogue as well as enhanced mutual trust and confidence within the Basin for regional transformation. Furthermore, state-of-the-art analytic tools such as the Nile Basin Decision Support System (NB DSS) and Policies, Strategies to guide the cooperative and sustainable management of the shared Nile Basin water resources have been developed while scientific and impartial knowledge products have been produced. In addition, individuals and institutions have benefited from a wide array of technical capacity building activities aimed at better management of the shared water resources thus closing the water resources knowledge gap among countries.



**« During my two-year tenure, I will focus on two key areas; one is pro-actively engaging in finding the way forward regarding the stalemate on the political/legal track with specific reference to the re-engagement of Egypt as well as attainment of full membership of Eritrea. The second is enhancing the commitment of the Member States to Nile cooperation. »**

At the same time, Member States have been assisted to prepare bankable joint investment projects worth more than USD 6.5 billion contributing to food, energy and water security in the region. Implementation of some of these projects by the Member States has been completed, demonstrating to riparian communities, the feasibility of Nile cooperation. Cases in point include the 300MW Ethiopia- Sudan Interconnector commissioned in 2015 by the Heads of State of the two countries and benefitting nearly 1.4 million households; the Eastern Nile Flood Preparedness and Early Warning project-Phase 1 which created a credible system that links multiple stakeholders to work together to reduce the risk of flood devastation.

Others are the ongoing construction of the Interconnection of Electric Grids of Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda with a total of 946 km of 220/400 KV transmission lines and 17 associated substations; and last but not least the 80MW Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric project jointly implemented

by Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. When completed, the Rusumo project will benefit more than 1 million people in the three countries.

In spite of these laudable achievements however Nile Basin citizens are yet to fully reap the benefits of Nile cooperation as a result of activities implemented under the technical track. The political/legal track is very important in setting a solid foundation for the technical track. What we are doing on the technical track can only be translated as investment benefit on the ground for the Member States if we ensure that NBI is one Nile – one family – and moving together.

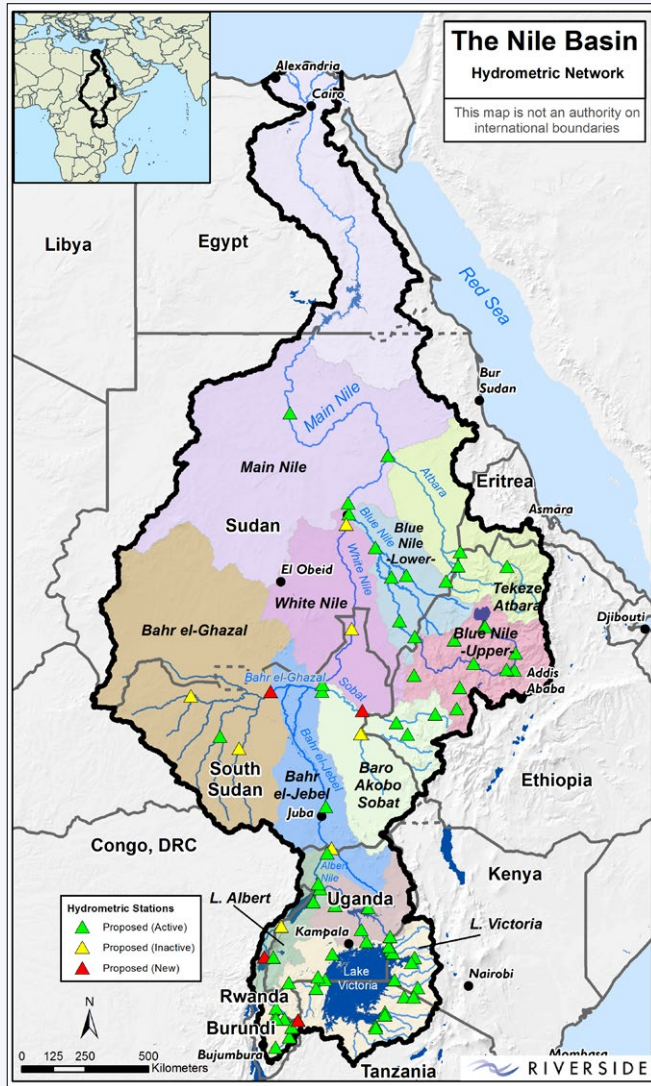
During my two-year tenure, I will focus on two key areas; one is pro-actively engaging in finding the way forward regarding the stalemate on the political/legal track with specific reference to the re-engagement of Egypt as well as attainment of full membership of Eritrea. The second is enhancing the commitment of the Member States to Nile cooperation. These two issues in particular need to be kept on the political agendas of the Member States.

Business as usual is not an option given risks that climate change in particular poses for all Nile Basin States and given the finiteness and fragility of ‘whole basin’ resources including the precious ecosystems. There is also a real danger that gains made to date through Nile cooperation could be reversed.

I look forward to the support and encouragement from all our key stakeholders and strategic partners as well as from the international community, which also has a major stake in regional peace and security.

Enjoy your reading!

**Prof. Seifeldin Hamad Abdalla**



not equipped with modern instruments that ensure more precise data collection and continuous and timely transmission of data.

« Studies conducted by NBI indicate substantial gaps in the current HydroMet monitoring infrastructure. There are hydrologically important areas of the Basin that are poorly monitored due to inadequate monitoring network; many monitoring stations are poorly equipped - some not operational for quite substantial periods of their history since establishment; many stations are not equipped with modern instruments that ensure more precise data collection and continuous and timely transmission of data. »

The Nile Basin is a shared river basin that stretches over 11 riparian countries. It covers contrasting hydro-climatic, ecological and socio-economic systems that span from tropical regions (the Nile Equatorial Lakes region) to desert/semi desert downstream parts. Each Nile Basin country has its own national hydro-meteorological monitoring system designed to serve a variety of purposes in the respective countries.

Studies conducted by NBI indicate substantial gaps in the current HydroMet monitoring infrastructure. There are hydrologically important areas of the Basin that are poorly monitored due to inadequate monitoring network; many monitoring stations are poorly equipped – some not operational for quite substantial periods of their history since establishment; many stations are

According to the survey conducted by NBI in 2014, there were approximately 949 meteorological and 427 hydrological stations in the Nile Basin. Over 70 percent of the meteorological stations measure either daily rainfall totals or rainfall and temperature. Most hydrological stations measure river or lake water levels. Monitoring of water quality, sediment transport in rivers, and groundwater are at their early stages in most countries. Data transmission from the stations to central data repository in most countries is manual.

Further, being designed to serve purposes within the country where they are installed, many stations needed substantial upgrading to serve transboundary water resources management. For example, flood preparedness for communities in low lying areas where most of the flood disaster causing high flow is generated

from an upstream country require real-time data collection and transmission to enable timely forecast of flood early warning and, thereby, save lives. This requires a monitoring system that is optimised to serve flood disaster preparedness across country boundaries.

### Implementation of the HydroMet System in the Nile Basin

From the onset, the work on the Nile Basin Regional HydroMet system has been a joint activity of all riparian states. A joint task force was formed way back in 2010 to formulate the Nile River Basin Monitoring Strategy, which was approved by the Nile Council of Ministers in 2011. The Strategy was the first step in articulating common objective strategy for realising a Nile Basin regional, at the time, river basin monitoring system.

Once the strategy was approved, through the support from the Nile Basin Trust Fund administered by the World Bank, the detailed design of the monitoring system, named as the 'Nile Basin Regional HydroMet' system, was developed. The NBI task force oversaw the needs assessment and detailed design together with NBI centres. The final design of the system was endorsed by the Nile Technical Advisory Committee in 2015 and subsequently approved by the Nile Council of Ministers in the same year.

Implementation of the first phase of the USD 5.1 million HydroMet System is planned to take approximately three years, i.e. from July 2018 to June 2021. This is with funding received from the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund under the EU – German 'Trans boundary Water Management in the Nile River Basin' programme.

### Benefits of the HydroMet system to Nile Basin countries

The Nile Basin Regional HydroMet System comprises of approximately 80 hydrological and 323 meteorological monitoring stations equipped with state of the art observation and with data transmission instruments. Further, the system also includes upgraded water quality laboratories in the NBI Member States; infrastructure for use of Earth Observation information and limited

**« The implementation of the HydroMet System will be accompanied by training of national technicians to ensure Member States have the necessary skilled staff to install, operate and maintain modern hydro-meteorological monitoring systems. »**

groundwater monitoring stations. The regional HydroMet system will be built on existing national monitoring networks with additional stations installed where none exist.

The Regional HydroMet System is designed to provide more reliable data and information for water resources management. The design was aimed at providing transboundary benefits in a number of areas, including: flood disaster preparedness; coordinated management of water storage dams; navigation; in addition to improved adaptation to climate change.

The NBI Member States will benefit from state of the art monitoring infrastructure, including support to increasing use of Earth Observation for the management of water and related natural resources.

With increasing availability of credible and continuously observed data, the countries will be able to improve the water resources planning and management, as well as utilise their water resources more efficiently – both at regional and national levels; be better prepared against natural hazards, such as floods and droughts; monitor changes in the Nile Basin climate and, hence, improve their climate change adaptation plans, among others.

The implementation of the HydroMet System will be accompanied by training of national technicians to ensure Member States have the necessary skilled staff to install, operate and maintain modern hydro-meteorological monitoring systems.

Member States will also benefit from joint monitoring information products.



# Member States validate Ground Water Project in the Nile Basin



Groundwater experts from the NBI member States, NBI staff, UNDP official and consultants who participated in the validation exercise

**T**he regional validation workshop for the Ground Water Project in the Nile Basin was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from April 9 – 11, 2019. The workshop was attended by members of the Regional Experts Working Group representing seven NBI Member States; Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Participants discussed and validated the final draft of the project document, as well as other documents for onward submission to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Secretariat. Also discussed were the project results framework matrix as well as the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the implementation of the project.

Groundwater is one of the most important sources of drinking water for people and livestock in the Nile Basin. Its importance is reflected in the proportion of population (>70% of rural population) that is dependent

on groundwater in many parts of the Basin. There is also an increasing use of groundwater for other economic activities including in irrigation, fisheries, mining, industries, etc.

In spite of its potential in filling the growing gap between water supply and demand, the resource is under human or naturally induced climatic and non-climatic pressures.

However, at the basin and national levels, each of the Nile Basin countries regards groundwater as an insufficiently understood asset that can contribute to resilience as a supplement to surface waters.

The objective of the Ground Water project therefore is to strengthen the knowledge base, capacity and cross-border institutional mechanisms for sustainable use and management of three selected transboundary aquifers, namely the Kagera aquifer, Mt. Elgon aquifer; and Gedaref-Adigrat aquifer.

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Speaking during the opening ceremony, Dr Adanech Yared, the host Nile Technical Advisory Committee member noted that there is a clear perception that groundwater resources are under threat from unsustainable exploitation, potential climate change, and pollution.

In recognition of the importance of transboundary groundwater bodies in the overall cooperative management and development of the Nile Basin water resources, the Nile Council of Ministers, NBI's highest

political decision making body, approved the initiation of a Ground Water project in the Nile Basin during their annual meeting held in June 2015.

“We are honoured to be part of this process as we recognise the role that ground water plays in surface water systems including rivers, wetlands and lakes, which has not been adequately considered in most transboundary river basin management initiatives, including the Nile Basin” said Mr. Daniel Omodo McMondo, representative of the UNDP Country Office in Uganda.

The Executive Director of the NBI Secretariat, Prof. Seifeldin Hamad Abdalla made reference to the NBI 10-year Strategy (2017-2027), which identifies six strategic objectives covering areas of sustainable use, monitoring and protection of groundwater resources. “One of the key strategic directions proposed is enhancing conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water,” he added.

The five-year Ground Water Project will be implemented with financial support from GEF.



Participants working in smaller groups during the validation exercise

**Jane K. Baitwa**  
Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist  
Nile-SEC, Entebbe



# Kenya to host 27<sup>th</sup> annual Nile Council of Ministers meeting



**T**he 27<sup>th</sup> annual Nile Council of Ministers meeting (Nile-COM), comprising Ministers in charge of Water Affairs in the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) Member States, is due to take place in Nairobi – Kenya, in September 2019.

Ministers from Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda will meet to consider the work plan for the NBI Secretariat for the financial year 2019/2020. The meeting will also provide strategic guidance and direction on NBI's investment portfolio now worth USD 6.5 Billion as well as the sustainability of the institution.

During the meeting, Kenya will assume the position of chairman of the Nile-COM, succeeding Burundi. Accordingly, Burundi's Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock, Hon. Dr. Déo-Guide Rurema will hand over to Kenya's Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of

Water and Sanitation, Hon. Simon Chelugui who will hold the position for the next one year.

The Nile Council of Ministers is the highest political and decision making body of the Nile Basin Initiative, an inter-governmental partnership established by the Nile Basin States in 1999, to foster cooperative management and development of the shared Nile Basin water resources for the benefit of Nile Basin citizens.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Nile-COM meeting will be preceded by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Nile Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC) meeting. Nile-TAC members will review documents prepared by Nile-SEC, before presentation to Nile-COM.

**Jane K. Baitwa**  
**Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist**  
**Nile-SEC, Entebbe**



# NBI makes high level presentation at the inaugural Ethiopia Water and Energy Week



Dr Seid (3<sup>rd</sup> from the left) speaking during the event

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), represented by the Deputy Executive Director of the NBI Secretariat who is also the Head of the Basin-wide Programme, Dr. Abdulkarim Seid made a high level presentation at the full plenary of the first ever Ethiopia Water and Energy week, held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. The topic of the presentation was ‘*Trans-boundary Rivers Water Utilisation Strategies, Based on Equitable and Reasonable use.*’

The event held from June 17 - 20, 2019 was officially opened by Her Excellency Sahle-Work Zewdie, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Dr. Seid, reminded the more than 1000 participants that demand for water, energy and food in the Nile Basin was rapidly rising, fueled by a population that is doubling every 20 – 25 years and now well over 300 million people living within the Basin. This is in addition to the fast growing economies of the Nile Basin countries. He noted that the present situation of uncoordinated national water resources plans in a shared basin cannot work. He further noted that the situation is being made worse, with no functioning legal

and institutional regime and an adequately mandated common basin-wide institution.

Dr. Seid added that it is now time to do more with less water by increasing basin wide water use efficiency, reducing losses, diversifying water sources by making use of groundwater, optimal use of surface water, desalination of ocean waters and more effective use of rainfall in order to ensure sustainability of the River Nile itself.

“The Nile Basin Initiative has taken steps to support Member States with information towards realising these and it needs to be further strengthened”, he emphasised.

Besides presentations made by its senior management staff, NBI has also set up an exhibition to show case and disseminate its various knowledge and communication products produced over the last 20 years since it was established.

**Polycarp Otieno Onyango**  
Communications Officer  
NELSAP CU, Kigali - Rwanda



## Question and Answer with former Executive Director, Eng Innocent Ntabana



Eng INNOCENT NTABANA was Executive Director of the NBI Secretariat from September 2016 to March 2019. He spoke to ELIZABETH AGIRO about his time at the helm of the organisation.

### 1. Your term as Executive Director has come to an end. Using two words, how would you describe that journey and why would you describe it that way?

Challenging but Exciting.

Challenging because of the limited internal financial resources to sustain the Institution.

Exciting considering what was achieved in spite of the challenges we went through.

### 2. Before you joined the Secretariat, what did you imagine your tenure would be like?

I had two major dreams, (1) Contributing to reaching a settlement on the CFA and the return of Egypt to cooperation, (2) Strengthening NBI to meet the expectations of the Member States and NBI's development partners.

For the first one I quickly realised that it was not easy considering the prevailing hydro politics. We then limited ourselves to building capacity in hydro diplomacy and engaging with the media as a way to create a favourable environment to the political process.

The second one was somehow achieved; we have a better structured Secretariat capable of effectively and efficiently planning and delivering on its mandate.

### 3. What would you say has been your greatest challenge running the Secretariat?

Managing the financial crisis, asking people to deliver while knowing that they are not motivated enough. I was really impressed by the resilience of the Secretariat team and their determination to achieve the set targets.

### 4. Do you think you achieved what you set out to do when you first got here?

I am very satisfied by what our team achieved thanks to the support of our Governance and development partners. What we couldn't achieve is linked to the basin politics therefore not under our control.

### 5. What lessons have you learnt from managing such a multicultural organisation?

First is that Integration of our activities is key. Whatever everyone plans and does constitute a building bloc to the overall achievement of the Institution. No one should be left behind or neglected.

Secondly, integrity, mutual respect and team work are ingredients to the Institution's stability and success.

### 6. What will you miss most about the NBI?

The talk around the Friday social tea/coffee [**Editor's Note:** Friday social tea/coffee is a tradition at the NBI Secretariat where staff socialise over a cup of tea/coffee and bites while updating each other on the events of the week gone by and what's planned ahead].

### 7. Any final words of wisdom you would like to share.

NBI is at a critical stage driving between two complementary forces. While the technical track is registering increasing success, the political track risks overshadowing that success. It is important to recognise the critical relevance of NBI at this particular time. As one participant said during the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary "If the NBI didn't exist, it would have to be invented".



# Climate Services for Adaptive Water Resources Management in the Nile Basin project gets nod from AfDB



AfDB officials together with Nile-SEC staff during the appraisal mission

The Nile Basin Initiative Secretariat (Nile-SEC) approached the African Development Bank (AfDB) with a proposal to provide funding support to a project titled 'Climate services for adaptive water resources management in the Nile Basin'. The Bank fielded a mission to Nile-SEC from April 24 – 29 to conduct an appraisal mission. The objective of the mission was to review the project design including the development objective; results based framework and implementation arrangements as well as the financial and procurement capacity and processes of the project executing agency, Nile-SEC.

The USD 700,000 project will be implemented over a period of 24 months with financial support from the ClimDev Special Fund (CDSF) administered by the AfDB.

The expected results include a climate change water resources forecasting programme in the Nile Basin countries; capacity development through a fellowship program and provision of a cluster for climate change data analysis at the Nile-SEC.

**Tom Waako**  
Programme Officer  
Nile-SEC, Entebbe

# Enhancing capacity on climate change analysis in the Nile Basin

NBI organises training on the use of MATLAB



Participants during the training at Nile-SEC

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) Secretariat recently organised training on the use of MATLAB as a tool for climate change data analysis.

One of the important aspects of sustainable water resources management is addressing the challenges of equitable water allocation for trans-boundary water bodies such as rivers, lakes and groundwater sources. The River Nile, which is considered the longest river in the world, crosses multiple countries before it drains to the Mediterranean Sea. Careful assessment and production of actionable relevant climate projection data that is spatially and temporally consistent with the impact assessment objective is the first step in understanding climate change impact for a region. These assessments are a cornerstone for charting potential adaptation pathways.

The training enabled participants who included five NBI staff, one from Makerere University and two from Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited to understand the basics of MATLAB.

The NBI Member States are already experiencing the effects of climate change and as such recognise the strong need for effective adaptation measures to climate change.

Goal number five of the NBI 10-Year Strategy (2017 – 2027) is to improve basin resilience to climate change impacts. NBI plans to carry out climate vulnerability assessment for major water systems and water use sectors in the Nile Basin; generate scenarios of water availability under different climate change scenarios and to prepare short-term to seasonal river flow forecasts to support operational water resources management. This is in addition to supporting harmonisation of climate change policies of the Member States; and building capacity of NBI centres (Secretariat, ENTRO and NELSAP CU) and Member States in areas of global climate finance.

This five day workshop training from May 13 – 17, 2019 was organised with support of the World Bank's Cooperation in International Waters (CIWA) project.

**Dr. Modathir Zaroug**  
Regional Water Resources Modeler  
Nile-SEC, Entebbe



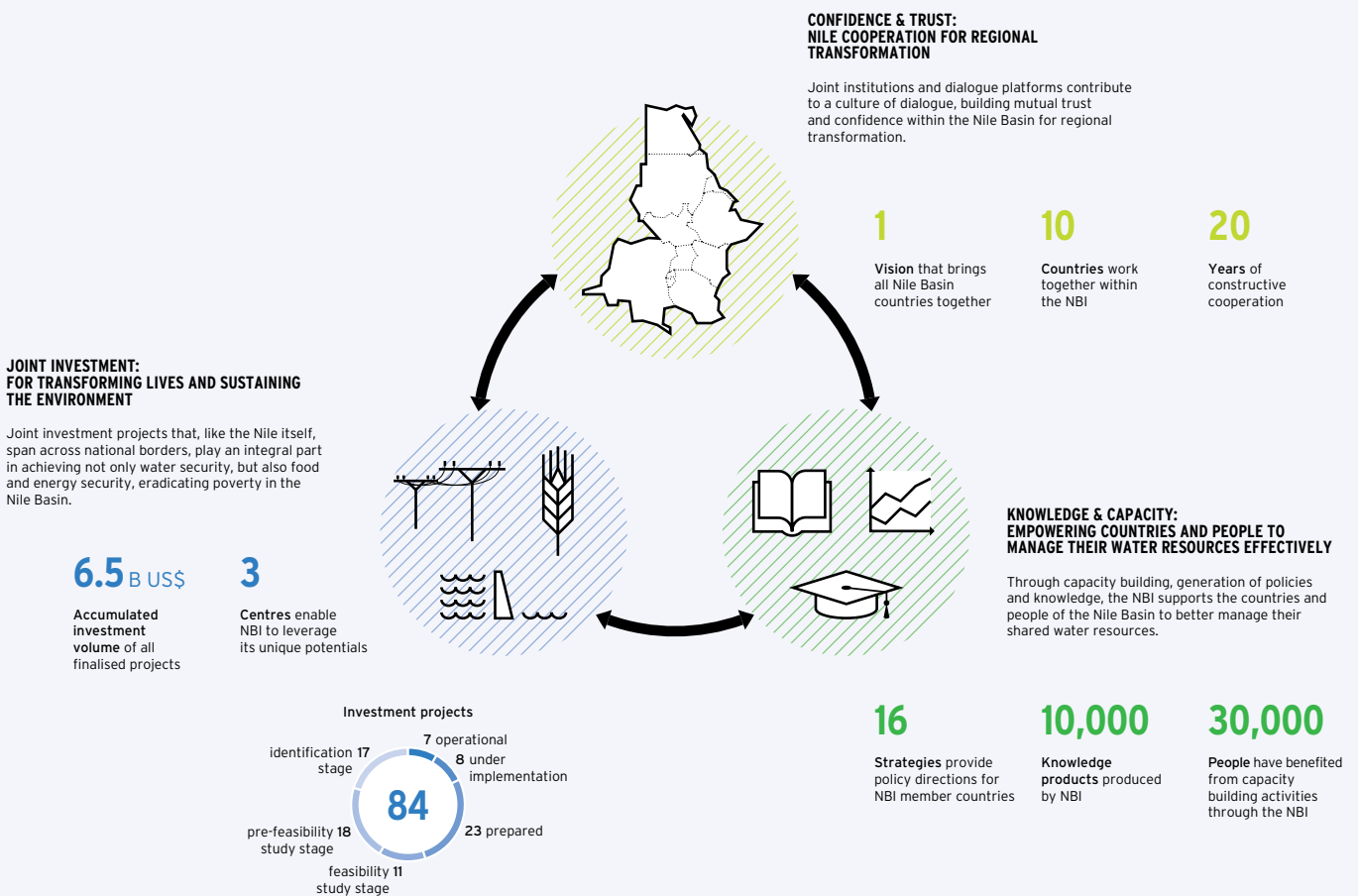
# NBI@20: Highlights of achievements

Some 20 years ago since it was established, the Nile Basin Initiative has registered commendable achievements.

The NBI has helped to build a culture of dialogue, mutual trust and confidence among the Member States, the scientific and impartial knowledge generated, capacity enhancement for institutions and individuals as well as policies and scientific tools

developed support the countries and the people to better manage their shared water resources.

Furthermore, joint investment projects worth USD 6.5 billion that, like the Nile itself, span across national borders have been prepared and these play an integral part in achieving water, food and energy security, as well as eradicating poverty in the Nile Basin.



# Share your story - 20 years NBI

**O**n February 22, 2019, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These are 20 years of weaving the histories of the Nile Basin together, 20 years of working to bring the potentials of the whole region to life, and 20 years of pushing to preserve our regional treasures.

To mark this momentous occasion, the Nile Council of Ministers, NBI's highest political decision making body, declared 2019 as 'The year of the Nile Basin'. As part of the celebrations, we are running an online campaign dubbed: #MyNileStory and you are invited to share your personal most memorable or favourite NBI, Nile or

Nile Basin moment with *Nile News* readers. Please send either a photo, in text (150 words maximum), or video (2 minutes maximum) to: [nbianniversary@nilebasin.org](mailto:nbianniversary@nilebasin.org)

May I also request that you attach your passport size photo, which together with your story, will be published on the website dedicated to the NBI 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary: <http://nbi20.nilebasin.org/>

We look forward to your contributions!

*Nile News* would like to share with you some of the stories so far received

## ASSEFA MULU BIDU

<< I live in Addis Ababa but was born on the banks of the Blue Nile River. In 2015, I embarked on an adventure to this great river where my father once struggled with a crocodile while trading on the river. Starting from a place called Gumer, it took me six hours on foot to reach the banks of the Blue Nile River at Mabil, a site now identified for hydropower development. Women carried charcoal, men let their cattle graze, and I even swam in the river - local tour guides know the area well and crocodiles are not around where the water is very deep. >>

[#MyNileStory](#)



## MADINA KARERE

A mother of five, Madina Karere is one of 53 people who received compensation due to displacement by the Rusumo Project.

<< We benefited a lot from this Rusumo project because as a result of the compensation we received, we started poultry farming and this has benefited me and my family a lot. I sell the eggs and get money to pay school fees. >>

[#MyNileStory](#)







Tuti bridge on the Blue Nile, connecting Khartoum and Tuti Island in The Sudan



Access NBI knowledge and best practices in water resource management.  
Share your knowledge and best practices.  
Log on to <http://nileis.nilebasin.org>

## NBI MEMBER STATES



Burundi



DR Congo



Egypt



Ethiopia



Kenya



Rwanda



South Sudan



The Sudan



Tanzania



Uganda

## NBI SHARED VISION OBJECTIVE

To achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilisation of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources.



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