

**Nile Basin Initiative:
Report of Findings from Opinion Research with Key Stakeholders
November 2008**

I. Background

The Nile Basin Initiative is a partnership of the countries that share the Nile River Water, formally launched in February, 1999. The Initiative provides a unique forum for the countries of the Nile to move forward in a cooperative way to realize tangible benefits in the Basin, and build a solid foundation of trust and confidence. Ultimately the NBI will be successful only if the countries are able to build working relationships to launch key programs and projects and overall cooperation.

In order to develop a more in-depth understanding of key stakeholders' perceptions of key issues related to the NBI, a primarily qualitative research assessment was conducted with opinion leaders in 8 NBI countries. Findings from the study will help guide future NBI communication, outreach and programmatic strategies.

II. Objectives

Research for the study was designed to provide insight into stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions in a number of key areas, including:

- Identification of key priorities of individual countries/region;
- Examination of overall attitudes toward NBI (strengths/weaknesses/expectations/etc);
- Understanding of stakeholders' overall receptivity to and attitudes toward a regional framework/overarching organization related to the Nile;
- Identification of key issues, benefits, messages, etc. to build support for regionalization;
- Identification of optimal strategies for meaningful outreach/communications and, ultimately, more successful results on the ground.

III. Methodology

Following an intensive training with consultants in June, a qualitative study in 9 Nile Basin Countries was fielded. (Consultant in Rwanda did not follow through on work. A second effort may take place and results would be added as an appendix.) All interviewers used a standard qualitative interview instrument to guide their discussions. The guideline included a few quantitative questions to measure overall aggregated views.

Interviewers chose names randomly from a database provided by the Nile Basin staff members in each country. All respondents were assured full confidentiality per global research accepted standards/ethics. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Arabic.

For the overall study, 124 interviews (either face-to-face or by telephone, depending on the availability of the respondent) were conducted in 8 countries. Following is a description of the complete research sample according to nationality and stakeholder group:

Representation by country:

- 15 interviews in each of the following countries:
 - DRC,
 - Uganda,
 - Ethiopia,
 - Kenya,
 - Tanzania,
 - Sudan
- 14 interviews in Burundi
- 20 interviews in Egypt

Representation by stakeholder group:

- Government = 36
- CSO/NGO = 32
- Media = 20
- Academia = 19
- Legal community = 8
- Private sector = 6
- Other = 3

Full transcripts and summaries from the interviews were reviewed by an analysis team in Washington, who were responsible for preparing a presentation and written report of the overall findings from the research.

IV. Research Findings

Following is a summary report of the key findings from the research.

A. Overall Context

1. Key Priorities and Challenges

Respondents from all countries and stakeholder groups identified similar priorities and challenges, both in their countries and for the region. By far the most commonly mentioned of these included:

- Poverty/food insecurity
- Conflict and security
- Governance/corruption.

Respondents also identified a variety of secondary challenges, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly related to the inability of individual countries to manage water resources effectively. These included:

- Environmental concerns (pollution, deforestation, etc.)
- Lack of consistent source of power for industrialization
- Lack of agricultural productivity (insufficient irrigation and dependence on rainfall)
- Threats and compromises to citizens' overall quality of life.

B. Regional Cooperation

1. A rationale for greater cooperation across countries

Within this context of widespread concerns related to water and water management, respondents from all countries and stakeholder groups repeatedly acknowledged the need for countries in the Nile Basin to work together in a more systematic and cooperative way.

“Regional cooperation is very low in proportion to all that’s at stake. If we could cooperate more between NBI countries, we could reduce our shared miseries.” DRC,
media

“In cooperating, countries can face challenges as a bloc and find collective solutions that benefit all citizens, no matter which side of the border they may lie.” Uganda, local
government

C. Regional Cooperation related to Water Resource Management

Research identified a range of risks and benefits associated with regional cooperation for water management in the region. Following is a brief summary of the most commonly cited risks and benefits.

1. Risks of participating

Respondents identified a variety of potential risks of participating in regional cooperation, including:

- Loss of sovereignty

“Cooperation is the key, but state sovereignty is always a challenge.” Uganda, legal community

- Regional conflict (both the fear that negotiations could actually precipitate conflict and a recognition of the potential impact of political instability and regional conflict on cooperative agreements

“Conflict is always a risk to anything we try to do here.”
Sudan/media

- Potential sacrifice of authority and quality control.

2. Risks of not participating

In addition to the risks of participating, respondents also identified the following potential risks of not participating in regional cooperation:

- Conflict/war

“The risk of no cooperation is a greater likelihood of war in the region.” Ethiopia, academia

- Economic isolation

“Not cooperating leads to economic strangulation.” Burundi, government

- Loss of regional influence

“Sudan and Egypt will be in danger if they do not cooperate, while other countries are becoming one bloc.” Sudan, legal community

- Pollution and waste

- Domino effect – with problems resulting from mismanagement in one country spreading throughout the region.

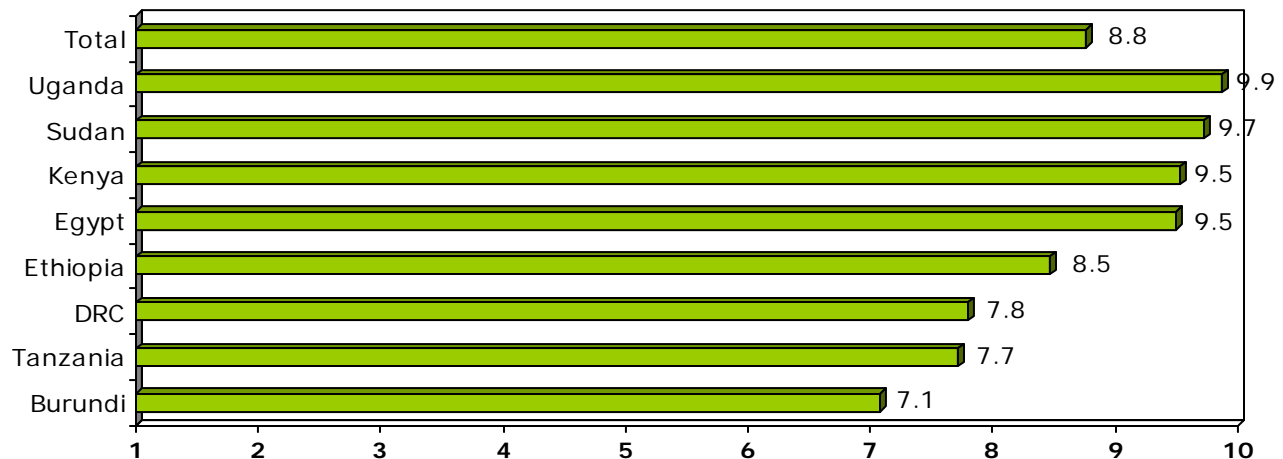
3. Benefits of participating

For the majority of respondents, the potential benefits of participating in regional cooperation far exceeded any risks associated with cooperating with neighboring countries. These included:

- Conflict resolution and increased security
- Crisis management
- Increased cooperation and integration
- Potential for increased economic development
- Potential for increased trade/opening markets
- Shared technical knowledge and expertise
- More effective regional development
- Greater influence in the region (for those with existing resources, expertise, etc.).

In this context, a substantial majority of respondents from all countries and stakeholders groups believed that cooperative water management is a both necessary and potentially beneficial initiative in the region. The following chart illustrates respondents’ assessment of cooperative water management (by country):

“How necessary do you believe cooperation between Nile Basin countries is on issues related to water resource management and resulting activities such as energy and power to ensure sustainable economic development?” (1-10 scale, 1 meaning completely unnecessary, 10 meaning fully necessary)



4. Challenges

Respondents across all groups identified a variety of factors that both reinforce the need for cooperative water management in the region and increase the difficulty of cooperative engagement in the short-term. These include:

- i. Lack of prioritization at the government level:** Respondents (except in Egypt) report that water is not viewed as a priority in their countries –particularly in government policy.

“Water is not at all a priority in our country’s planning for the future but should be.” Burundi, Civil Society

“Uganda is not managing or even using the Nile optimally. We still rely on rain.” Academia, Uganda

“I don’t know what the government is doing or who is in charge.” Tanzania, CSO

“It has been mismanaged, even by the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources.” Sudan, academia

- ii. Lack of political leadership and will**

“There needs to be a national agenda on water resource management.” Uganda, CSO

“There needs to be a body managing the Nile in our country, but right now it is not managed at all.” Sudan, academia

“There is enough water in reality. Yet there are also areas within the country where there is no water completely due to misuse, mismanagement and poor quality.” Kenya, academia

- iii. Lack of awareness of water shortages and other water-related problems at all levels of society**

“Water management is not only to be changed, but rather to be conceived and put in place because such a policy is non-existent at the moment.” Burundi, civil society

“Water is a necessity, but people don’t see it as a priority. Otherwise they would not be wasting and misusing it the way they are now.” Kenya, media

iv. Widespread corruption, cronyism and neglect

“The major obstacle is politics. Most issues related to natural resources are politicized including water. Instead of appointing natural resource experts to head the environment departments, politicians are appointed as a reward for support of ruling party.” Uganda, local government

v. Lack of knowledge and technical expertise

vi. Lack of financial resources and institutional capacity

vii. Lack of integration at the ministry level

“One hand doesn’t know what the other is doing.”

viii. Lack of understanding of the relationship between water and nearly every aspect of governance and development (food, agriculture, power, industry, transportation, health/sanitation, security, etc.).

“Leaders need to be sensitized in order to grasp the importance of water to the development of this country.” Burundi, Civil Society

“The people of Kenya are not taking water as a priority because nobody has told them the impact of the destruction of water towers, forests, etc. for their lives.”
Kenya, media

“It is high time that Tanzania recognizes the importance of water and invests more in water resource management for food production, manufacturing and improved health.” Tanzania, private sector

ix. Isolation/self interest

“At present, despite the fact that NBI countries talk of a common vision, each one of them is operating on its own as a sovereign state and this leads to conflict of interests.” Kenya, NGO

x. Other existing bi-lateral agreements

xi. Lack of resources of member countries

“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Sudan, legal

xii. Competing regional commitments

“I think we can achieve these objectives more effectively through the EAC, which has stronger leadership than NBI.” Tanzania/parliament

xiii. Fear of neglecting other challenges in the country (e.g., ethnic tensions).

5. Opportunities

For many respondents, these challenges also represent an enormous opportunity for NBI to play several key roles in the region moving forward:

- An honest broker, mediating conflict and mistrust among member countries and facilitating productive relationships between countries going forward.
- A catalyst for awareness and change (motivator, convener, facilitator, educator)
- *Water Knowledge Bank*: a center for useful, applicable, accessible knowledge on water management (policy and scientific), with particular emphasis on knowledge that is mobile and deployed.
- A facilitator of increased ownership and commitment to the cooperative process among member countries going forward.
- Dissolve mistrust (experts = *ambassadors*)

6. A built-in constituency

Respondents clearly understand water’s role in their countries’ well being. Virtually all stakeholders recognize the connection between water, development and security. Water resource management is referred to as “an absolute – but unrealized – priority.”

“Water is life. Quality water enables the prevention of all kinds of disease.”
Government, Burundi

“Water is comparable to oil in terms of wealth in this century.” Media, DRC

“It’s indispensable to our development. The DRC is the continent’s greatest water producer but the population lives in darkness. A total paradox.” Civil Society, DRC

“It’s abnormal that people die of hunger in our country where water is so abundant.”
Civil Society, Burundi

“It’s planning and management is more important than oil.” Private Sector, Egypt

*“Water does not respect territorial boundaries. Any negative use by one country will affect the other countries in the region.”*Kenya/university

*“Lack of cooperation could lead to unilateral proposing of projects that may have negative consequences on one another or jeopardize sustainability of the resource itself.”*Sudan, government

“Regional cooperation reduces the risk of making unilateral decisions and actions on the Nile and hence reduces the potential for competition and conflict.” Ethiopia, private sector

“Water equals food security.” Tanzania, media

7. Egypt

Across the countries there is a strong concern, at best – fear and suspicion at worst – about Egypt’s role and interest in cooperation. For many respondents, Egypt is not just a concern; it represents an overriding and one of the primary obstacles to productive cooperative engagement in the region.

“Risks arise if a country like Egypt continues to enjoy unfair advantage over the other Nile Basin countries.” Uganda, local government

a. Suspicions of donor bias

Respondents repeatedly acknowledged long-time resentment over the “unfair terms” provided by existing treaties, along with enduring suspicions of external donor bias toward Egypt in all issues related to the Nile Basin.

“Some countries, like Egypt, want to see the old treaties continue to operate, knowing that these treaties favor the downstream countries at the expense of the upstream countries.” Ethiopia/CSO

“Egypt tries to make other countries swallow a treaty it signed with Great Britain in 1929 that does not involve the other NBI countries.” Burundi, government

“Ethiopians believe that Egypt has been lobbying donors so they would not support Ethiopia’s development activities around the sub-basins of the Nile River.” Ethiopia, legal community

b. Resentments of Egyptian dominance in the region

Egypt is widely viewed by other member countries as occupying a dominant – and dominating – position in watershed management (resulting from accumulated experience and expertise, the urgency of its need, and its ongoing commitment to understanding and addressing water-related issues). A substantial majority of respondents view Egypt as largely self-interested in its approach to the Nile, with little reason or incentive to cooperate with its neighbors.

“Egypt will use whatever means are necessary to influence whatever is happening in its lifeline.” Tanzania, parliament

c. Huge potential for Egypt as partner and model

In spite of these persistent resentments and concerns, respondents also recognize the enormous value that Egypt could bring to their countries in terms of expertise, experience, knowledge and skills related to water management. In this context, Egypt is perceived by other countries as simultaneously the biggest obstacle *to* cooperation and the best argument *for* cooperation. Respondents outside of Egypt believe there is great technical capacity in the country related to water and recognize that Egyptian experts could bring critical knowledge to their countries.

“Water is life and death to them. They’ve had to do what they’ve done in order to survive.” Sudan, academia

“Egypt should not be blamed since the Nile water is all they have. If they don’t use it effectively, they are totally in the desert.” Kenya, NGO

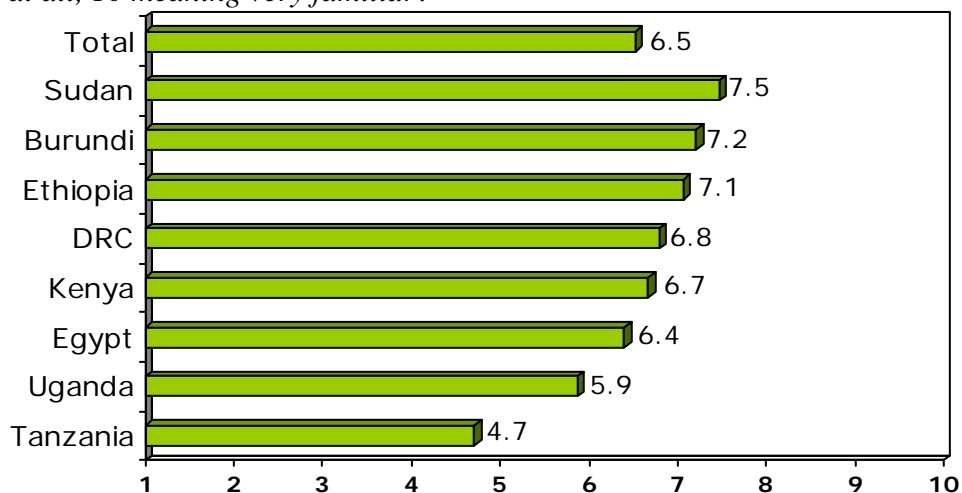
“We lag far behind them, with no strategic plans on how to benefit from the Nile. We need to be careful in cooperating with them, but we also have much to learn from their example.” Tanzania, academia

D. Nile Basin Initiative – Awareness and Perceptions

1. Awareness

Respondents reported varying levels of awareness of NBI and its ongoing work in their individual countries and the regional overall, ranging from 4.7 (on a 10-point scale) in Tanzania to 6.5 in Sudan. The following chart illustrates awareness of NBI, both by country and overall.

“How familiar are you with the work of the NBI on a scale of 1-10, 1 meaning not familiar at all, 10 meaning very familiar?”



2. Perceptions

Research revealed a wide range of understanding of NBI's role and objectives among respondents. Respondents variously described NBI in the following ways, with no single dominant role emerging among respondents overall. Following are the most commonly cited roles and objectives for NBI:

- A forum for mutual understanding, cooperation and the exchange of ideas and concerns

“It brings everyone to the table together to discuss a common issue, which had mystified in the past.” Ethiopia, media

- A deliberative body, whose primary purpose in the ratification of a cooperative agreement for regional water resource management

“They’re working to create a protocol for future cooperation on Nile projects.”
Ethiopia, government

“Their one purpose is achieving the cooperative agreement.” Kenya, academia

- Guarantor of equitable distribution of resources
- Source of knowledge on all things related to the Nile

In addition to this diverse knowledge and expectations, a substantial group of respondents reported that they know very little about what NBI is and is meant to accomplish.

“Is NBI an agency, an institute, or what? I’m not even sure.” Tanzania, CSO

3. Overall positive impressions

In spite of the widespread confusion and/or lack of basic knowledge regarding the formal role and objectives of NBI, the vast majority of respondents provided a positive assessment of NBI overall. Most respondents described NBI as fulfilling a perceived crucial need in the region for greater collaboration and coordination. Generally speaking, NBI is virtually synonymous with coordination and better management of the Nile, fulfilling a crucial need in addressing the current absence of collaborative thinking on water management related to the Nile Basin

“NBI has as its objectives, cohesion between member countries in order to resolve conflicts and to ensure development for all. Four of the countries have fought each other

in the last ten years. Today however their ministers and experts work together toward achievement of NBI objectives.” DRC media

“NBI is an element of peacekeeping. If water is properly shared, it favors peace in the region. Risks are lack of comprehension and non-cooperation.” DRC, media

“Water security and national security are strongly related so we must keep the Nile water safe and clean. To conserve the water in light of all current conflicts and political incitement against Egypt, we need to cooperate with the Nile Basin countries.” Egypt, media

Respondents from all groups described NBI as an essential corrective to what they perceive as a critical lack of knowledge and expertise throughout the region.

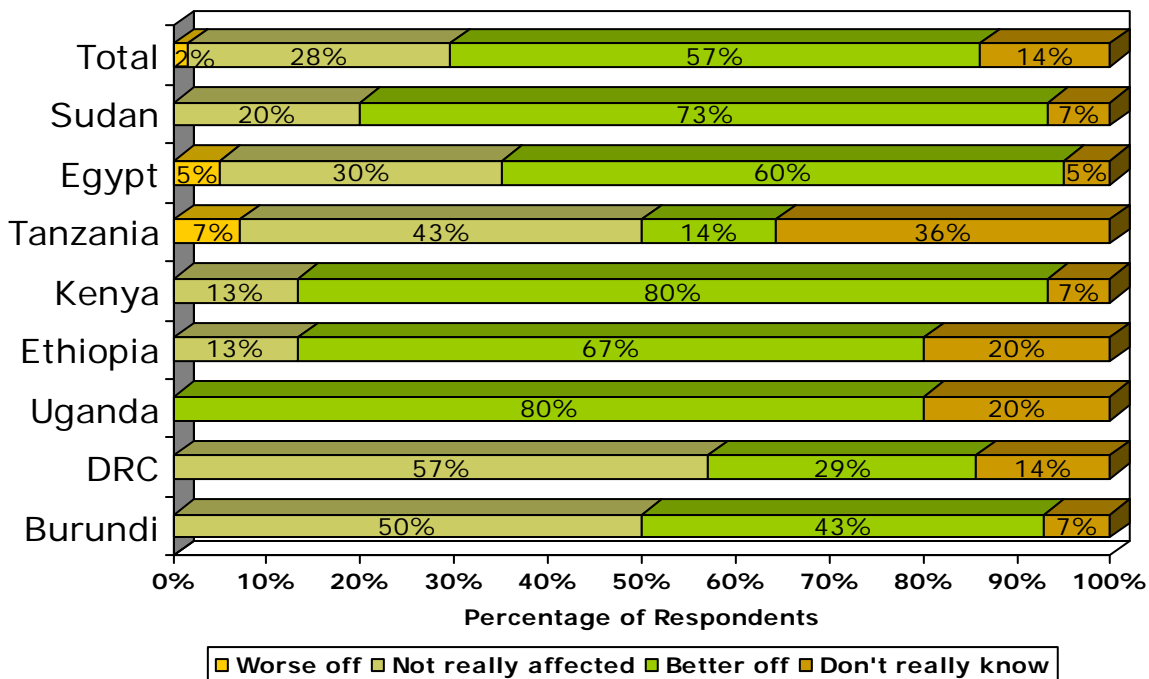
“NBI is credible because it has the experts. When they speak you take their word. You can’t dispute them.” Uganda, media

“We could do a better job managing the Nile. We do not have a second generation of experts ready to take over water resource management in Egypt.” Egypt, CSO

In this context, the vast majority of respondents from all groups described NBI as both beneficial and effective, both for their individual countries and for the region overall.

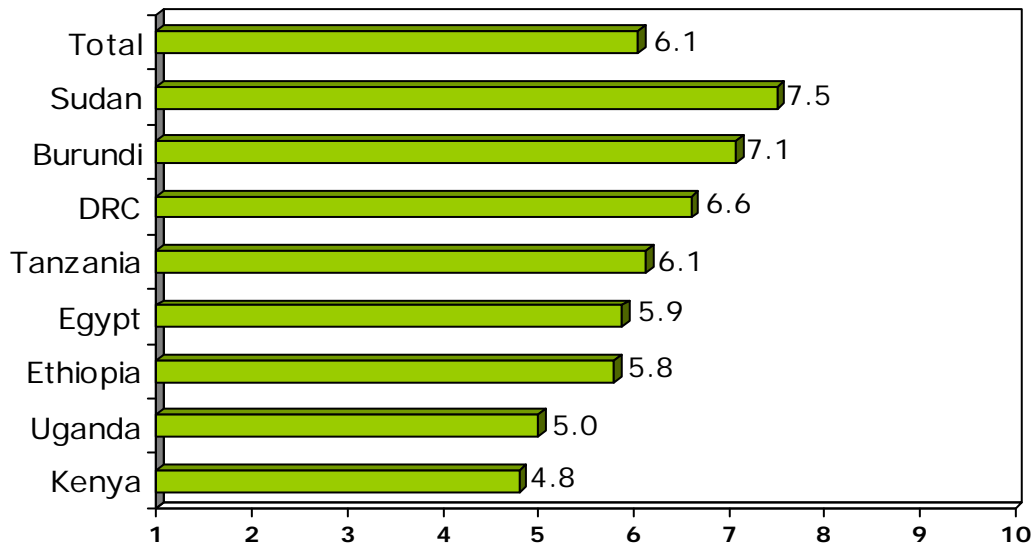
Benefits: The following chart provides a country-by-country assessment of stakeholders’ response to the statement: “The region is better off with the Nile Basin Initiative”:

“Is the region worse off, better off, or not really affected by the NBI or an initiative of this nature?”



Effectiveness: The following chart illustrates respondents' assessments of the overall effectiveness of NBI:

To what degree do you believe the NBI is an effective organization on a scale of 1-10, 1 meaning not effective at all, 10 meaning very effective?"



4. Concerns about NBI

In spite of their largely positive assessment of NBI, respondents also reported a range of concerns regarding NBI's potential to fulfill its promise in the region. These included:

a. Results: Lack of visible "progress on the ground"

"NBI needs implementation because now there are only studies and expectations."
Egypt, government

"DRC gains nothing. NBI doesn't benefit the population living in Congo's Nile Basin area. The Congolese directors are 2000km away and they know nothing of realities of Eastern DRC." DRC, academia

"It's headed in the right direction but not moving fast enough. NBI is more active when it comes to minister conferences. Lots of noise but it fades. Lots of rhetoric but no concrete actions taken." Uganda, academia

b. Awareness: Lack of awareness at all levels of society regarding the potential benefits of NBI

“It needs to articulate its vision better. All the public sees are occasional advertisements and big project cars. That’s not adequate.” Uganda, local government

“NBI needs to reach out more to foreign affairs ministries to give it a strategic dimension because the issues are political, less so technical.” Egypt, regional organization

“The priority of NBI should be confidence building. People just don’t know about anything here. Other projects won’t succeed without confidence building.” Egypt, government

c. Relationships: Ongoing suspicions and mistrust among countries throughout the region

“Each member must obtain the interest it seeks, otherwise NBI would not be sustainable.” DRC academic

“Egypt has a little too much influence over NBI. It’s a real problem.” DRC, government

“Other countries don’t need the Nile. They can depend on rainwater. Uganda can use lake Victoria.” Egypt, government

“Everything happens as though the Nile belongs to Egypt and Sudan.” Burundi, government

5. A “Tipping Point” for NBI

Research strongly suggests that the combination of (1) heightened expectations, (2) limited outreach, and (3) continued lack of progress on the ground has created a serious expectation-management challenge.

- On the positive side, research revealed that NBI currently enjoys widespread credibility among all stakeholder groups, with the potential for enormous achievements in the region.

“As a result of the activities of the NBI, there has been a paradigm shift. Countries no longer approach the issue of the Nile Basin from the perspective of the ‘rightful owner’ but shared ownership of the Nile River. This has created enormous potential for positive change.” Ethiopia, media

The vast majority of respondents recognize a critical connection between NBI and the region’s ongoing, interrelated needs for water, food, development and security.

- On the negative side, the critical need for cooperative water management in the region – combined with the general information vacuum regarding NBI and its

“I’m hopeful that NBI will help us achieve peace and security throughout the region.”
Sudan, media

Research suggests that the situation has potentially reached a tipping point, in which NBI must either begin to fulfill its potential or suffer a decline in enthusiasm and receptivity among key stakeholders. Respondents repeatedly cautioned that simply maintaining the status quo is not an option.

“They talk of many projects but no action. They use the excuse of the protocol. They should hurry up and get it signed to provide legal support for projects.” Uganda,
parliamentarian

“NBI needs to help member countries put together economic development projects.”
Burundi, government

E. Looking Forward for NBI

Research for the study revealed a number of key priorities and indicators for determining NBI’s success – or lack of success – going forward. These include:

1. Cooperative Framework

Throughout the interviews, respondents from all groups repeatedly stressed the importance of a fully endorsed cooperative framework for ensuring NBI’s future effectiveness. Ideally, respondents emphasized the need for NBI to ratify the framework as quickly as possible – and in a way that ensures equitable use and distribution of the Nile’s resources for all member countries.

“The cooperative framework has yet to be signed. Nothing will be achieved until that occurs.” Sudan, university

“The biggest challenge by far is signing the cooperative framework.” Tanzania, CSO

In reality, however, the majority of respondents recognized the difficulty of achieving this result in the short-term future. They insisted, however, that this understandable delay is no excuse for the absence of communications regarding the ongoing status of the negotiations. The key to maintaining NBI’s credibility in the short-term is to be highly transparent and responsive about the ongoing status of the framework negotiations and other related organizational activities. Continued silence, respondents warned, will eventually undermine stakeholders’ confidence and trust in NBI.

“I have been informed that the signing is delayed because of Ethiopia despite Egypt and Sudan being accused of delay.” Egypt, media

Ongoing silence regarding the status of the cooperative agreement is also believed to increase stakeholders' widespread suspicions that lack of ratification is *excuse* for lack of action.

“If they don’t start producing results soon, they run the risk of becoming like other western institutions in the region – just one more elephant with no tusks.” Kenya, academia

2. Need for transitional narrative for the Cooperative Framework

Given the time and difficulty that are inevitably involved in ratifying the Cooperative Framework, respondents suggested the need for a transitional narrative that positively links current deliberations to future benefits. Several respondents noted that – given the longstanding conflicts and mistrust throughout the region – the achievement of having reached this point in the current negotiation process is in itself significant – and should be reported as such in NBI’s ongoing communication with stakeholders.

“As a result of the NBI, there has been a paradigm shift. Countries no longer approach the issue of the Nile Basin from the perspective of the ‘rightful owner’ but shared ownership of the Nile River. This has already created enormous potential for positive change.” Ethiopia, media

“The framework, once achieved, will allow countries to begin carrying out activities on a cooperative basis.” Kenya, legal community

3. Results on the ground

Respondents from all countries and groups repeatedly complained about the conspicuous lack of *“results on the ground.”*

“It all looks good on paper. What’s needed are visible results on the ground.” Sudan, academia

“There is no action on the ground.” Kenya, academia

Combined with the perceived lack of progress on the cooperative framework, this absence of visible projects contributes to an emerging impression of ineffectiveness and irrelevance.

“It would be impossible for me to make a judgment about their relevance or impact here, since I’ve yet to see any results at all.” Tanzania, media

4. Redefine Results

In this context, the challenge for NBI is to redefine the meaning of “results on the ground,” demonstrating to stakeholders how NBI can make meaningful contributions throughout the region *without* the current ability to deliver, for instance, a fully functioning dam or hydro electric plant.

To achieve this end, respondents reported the need for NBI to communicate its role and relevance on several key levels, including:

- Facilitating the cooperative regionalization of the Nile Basin
- Catalyzing (and potentially enforcing) member governments to clarify and commit to policies related to water management.

“NBI has brought politicians together to discuss sharing of the Nile and it has invested in capacity building by facilitating specialized training and research. It’s headed in the right direction.” Uganda, CSO

- Assuring a harmonized, comprehensive, consistent, systematic approach to water policies across the region, including:
 - Facilitating knowledge sharing, best practices and other cooperative learning initiatives across countries (avoid reinventing the wheel)
 - Coordinating high level technical visits across countries (ambassadorial opportunity as well)
 - Ensuring that countries meet shared commitments related to water management through oversight and monitoring mechanisms. (Accountability and responsibility will result after establishing country by country benchmarks.)
 - Provide intellectual guidance on moving issue of water out of just one ministry (water) and throughout a range of ministries including foreign affairs, finance, etc., to help broaden constituencies.
- Building capacity of government and communities, with a particular emphasis on government efforts to ensure participation of affected communities and stakeholder groups.

“NBI needs to provide more support to civil society so they can help sensitize communities on the ground toward water and resource management.” Uganda, civil society

- Supporting government efforts to educate and communicate more effectively about water management and water as a key priority, including shared best practices among and within member countries.

5. Build support for country priorities

Research also suggests the need for narratives that highlight country-specific initiatives with tangible benefits to local populations. This might include, for example, providing support for country efforts for ‘low hanging fruit’ initiatives that begin to build awareness for all issues related to Nile (e.g., Niles Days, Nile Cup, re-vegetating the banks of Nile for local communities, etc.).

Respondents further identified a number of country-specific priorities related to water and around which compelling stories and messages can be developed:

- Burundi: Deforestation, re-vegetation, hydroelectric power
- DRC: Deforestation, re-vegetation, hydroelectric power
- Egypt: Pollution
- Ethiopia: Irrigation, hydroelectric power
- Kenya: Irrigation, increased emphasis on Lake Victoria
- Sudan: Poverty, irrigation (e.g., water-pipe technology in rural areas)
- Tanzania: Irrigation, watershed management
- Uganda: Agriculture production and fisheries, irrigation, re-vegetation/forestation of banks of Nile

6. Need for strategic outreach

Research suggests that there is no pressing need for NBI to “prove itself” in the current environment. Among respondents, NBI is already branded as smart, credible and focused on the right issues. In order for NBI to sustain its credibility over time, however, respondents insist that it must leave the *Ivory Tower* and reach out beyond its current interactions with representatives of government Water Ministries to include other relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries (government, parliament, media, university, civil society, etc.)

“NBI cannot be accessed by the media or NGOs, since they do not know where the find NBI. Kenya, legal community

“Parliament knows nearly nothing about NBI.” Uganda, government

Respondents suggested that this can be achieved by increased outreach to journalists (widely viewed as the most effective partners for “telling the NBI story”) and greater attention to the needs and concerns of local communities and local governments (with particular emphasis on “local custodians,” i.e., farmers, fishermen, etc.).

“Even journalists can’t access information freely. You have to know someone. We only get information if NBI donates to a community and they need press coverage for the event.” Uganda, media

“Get the people interested. Get them motivated. Show them how they will benefit from this initiative and win them over.” Kenya, academia

V. Implications and Recommendations

Research for the study suggested the following recommendations for enhancing NBI’s effectiveness in the region moving forward.

1. The need for a “Defining Message” – The link between water and development must become a mantra to move governments to act, and communities to demand action. To reinforce this vital connection, the following models should be stressed and (wherever possible) practically illustrated in all future communications with stakeholders:

- Water = Development + Security + Food
- NBI = Water + Development + Security + Food

2. Communication and Outreach – Virtually all respondents agreed that, in order to be successful, NBI must substantially expand its outreach to include key stakeholders and beneficiaries (beyond its current emphasis on Water Ministry officials) and to build broader constituencies and relationships at all levels of society. Critical areas of need include:

- Journalists,
- Parliamentarians,
- Representatives of local communities (local officials, CSO leaders, etc.).

Increased NBI outreach, according to respondents, should provide regular updates regarding the status of the Cooperative Framework (always defining the negotiations as an arduous but ultimately positive process). A number of respondents also noted the need for NBI to update and improve its website.

Throughout all communications and interactions with stakeholders, NBI should define itself in relation to three interrelated roles/benefits:

- An **honest broker** between traditionally isolated nations,
- A **motivator for and convener** of cooperative discussions, learning, etc.,
- A **“Water Knowledge Bank”** providing reliable and useable information and technical expertise for partners throughout the region.

- 3. Investment in Government Policy and Capacity** – NBI’s value is largely determined by the country infrastructure in which it exists. Respondents from all groups repeatedly complained that lack of knowledge and capacity at the national government level limits the effectiveness of water management throughout the region. Many respondents emphasized the urgent need for NBI to encourage, train and equip government officials in various aspects of effective water resource management, including:
- Encouraging a multi-ministry approach to water (instead of the current exclusive emphasis on Water Ministries)
 - Providing government officials with training and incentives to educate and motivate the public around water issues
 - Serving as a “Water Knowledge Bank” for relevant government officials at all levels
 - Addressing current shortages in institutional capacity and technical expertise
 - Including parliamentarians in forthcoming communications and training.
- 4. Managing Stakeholder Expectations/Developing a Transitional Narrative** – Respondents stressed NBI’s urgent need to manage stakeholder expectations, emphasizing modest but tangible results on the ground. More than anything else, this would require the development and dissemination of a cohesive narrative around the ongoing process for achieving the Cooperative Framework and related activities (e.g., convening multi-country meetings, building a library of respected technical expertise, facilitating the sharing of information and expertise among countries, etc.)
- 5. Egypt as a Model for Cooperative Water Management** – Respondents also suggested the usefulness of mobilizing Egyptian (and Sudanese) professionals to provide training, consultation and “best practice” demonstrations for other member countries. All training mechanisms should be tailored to the needs and interests of member countries (e.g., workshops, on-the-job training, exchange programs, etc.). Respondents agreed that such activities have the potential to address critical national and local needs for information and technical expertise while simultaneously mitigating widespread mistrust of Egypt as an obstacle to cooperative engagement in the region.