

Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)

Fact Sheet -July 2020

Background

- The Nile river, which is 6,650 kilometers in length is the longest river in the world. It is shared by eleven countries: Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- Ethiopia is the source of 86 per cent of the Nile waters.
- The Nile is Ethiopia's major water resource covering 70% of its annual surface water. Two-third of Ethiopia's hydroelectric power potential is also in the Nile Basin. More than 40 per cent of the Ethiopian population lives in the Nile Basin which covers one-third of Ethiopia's territory.
- 65 million Ethiopians have no access to electricity; two-third of school children in Ethiopia are forced to stay in darkness, whereas virtually all Egyptians have access to electricity.
- Most of Ethiopia's energy is derived from biomass resulting in deforestation and environmental degradation.
- Women in Ethiopia spend a significant portion of their time collecting firewood.
- Despite being the main source of the Nile, Ethiopia, with a population of over 110 million, has not benefited from it.
- After 13 years of negotiation among the Nile basin countries, in 2010, five Nile Basin countries signed the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) and one more country did so in 2011. The treaty outlines principles, rights and obligations for cooperative management and development of the Nile Basin water resources. Four of the signatories have ratified the treaty.

The signatories include Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Egypt and the Sudan did not sign the treaty citing the inclusion of the

unjust 1959 bilateral treaty that shares the entire Nile water between them leaving zero percent for the nine source countries of the water.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)

- Ethiopia commissioned construction of The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) to harness the waters of the Nile while at the same time observing the principles of equitable use and not causing significant harm to lower riparian countries.
- The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a five-billion-dollar project wholly owned and funded by the Ethiopian people through contributions, donations, and the sale of bonds.
- The GERD is designed to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges of sustainable development. In short, the completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and its commissioning is an existential issue for Ethiopia.
- The GERD is a non-water consumptive project by design. Even the location of the dam which is only 28 km from the Sudanese border deep in the gorges of the Nile attests to the non-consumptive objective of the dam. After hitting the turbines, the water flows back into the Nile and continues its flow to the Sudan and Egypt. The primary objective of the dam is to ease the country's critical energy deficit.
- Following the launching of the GERD project in 2011, Ethiopia, in the spirit of cooperation and creating mutual trust between the three countries, invited Egypt and the Sudan for consultations and initiated a series of platforms and even shared with them all the designs and blueprints for the dam. This is in spite of the existence of any agreement that obliges Ethiopia to do so.
- Likewise, Ethiopia also initiated and facilitated the formation of several trilateral mechanisms. These included the creation of the International Panel of Experts (IPOE), and the Tripartite National Committee (TNC) to implement the IPOE's recommendations and later the National Independent Scientific

Research Group (NISRG) to formulate “different scenarios and the first filling and annual operation of the GERD.” All these initiatives, however, failed to deliver the desired result due to Egypt’s obstructionism that emanates from its desire to maintain its hegemony over the Nile river.

The 1959 bilateral treaty between Egypt and Sudan

- In 1959 Egypt and the Sudan signed a treaty allocating all the waters of the Nile (84BCM) between themselves: 67% to Egypt, 23% to the Sudan and reserving 10% for evaporation in the desert. According to the bilateral treaty of 1959 nothing was left for the nine upstream riparian countries including Ethiopia.
- Naturally, Ethiopia declared it will not be bound by the treaty.
- This is the treaty on which Egypt bases its claim of ‘historic rights’ and ‘current use’.

Current situation

- Currently, the African Union [is seized](#) the matter. The African Union Bureau of Assembly convened an extraordinary meeting on 26 June 2020 to discuss developments pertaining to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). It urged Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to find a mutually acceptable and amicable solution on the outstanding technical and legal issues in the negotiations process.
- To accommodate the concerns of Egypt and the Sudan during the filling period of the Dam, Ethiopia agreed to fill the GERD in stages spread over four to seven years which could have been filled within two to three years. Despite this good will gesture on Ethiopia’s part, Egypt remains intransigent and unwilling to make any compromise. It keeps insisting on maintaining the unjust water sharing arrangements between Egypt and the Sudan that Ethiopia was not part of and does not recognize.
- Ethiopia will start test- filling the dam in July this year.