

The Pain of Damming Rivers in Africa: a case of Uganda

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Introduction / Background

In Africa, dams have been developed under the guise to light the otherwise termed as the Dark continent, to eradicate poverty and spur development

Dams present a picture of energy needs solutions and development mainly because that is what is fronted by the dam proponents in the process of amassing both social / community and financial approvals and support.

A recent 2021 count put the number of dams in Sub-Saharan Africa at a total of **980 large dams** with around 589 of them in South Africa

Despite this rosy picture about dams is what is heard about them, much more harm and dirt goes with them that if they were all to be put at a proper free and fair critical lens, the choices in many cases would be alternatives to the dams.

Exorbitant Costs / channels of Corruptions

- They are expensively built; much more than necessary is spent on them, there by increasing the poor taxpayers burden. That can't be development!
- At the time of its construction at a cost of 1,000 million Dollars, the most controversial and **over estimated 250 MW. Bujagali dam was said to be x3 more expensive** than any dam of the same size in the world.
- When we were straggling to come to terms with that; in 2018 the government negotiated with WB, for a refinancing package — estimated at \$500 million — in addition to tax breaks and a longer repayment plan.
- **Was that all? I wish it were!!!**

The pain on the affected communities & persons

- Poor and delayed compensation packages for the affected community members
- Poor resettlement action plan and packages – **poor land with poor soils, denial of resources access, exposure to new gender based risks for women and girl children.**
- The pain borne by the affected host communities is too much, is cruel, it is not deserving, especially for the people project proponents claim to develop. (over 10 complaints were lodged to the World Bank Inspection Panel, IFC's accountability mechanism and CAO on Bujagali alone. More went to AfDB, and EIB.

- what about the costs that go with the controversies involved in a project – where do they fall? Are they charities? The time money lost by the affected community in complaints filing, the CSOs advocacy, activism and engagements of stakeholders locally and internationally, the IFIs costs of complaints handling is just too much and if all were to be compiled, the project would never be worth it

Press quotes By: Sophie Edwards, Devex Date:
Wednesday, February 21, 2018

- *President Museveni, who has made hydro power generation for industrialization one of his pet subjects, was duped into believing Bujagali would generate 250MW of electricity, former Energy Minister Hilary Onek said.*
- *The minister, now handling the internal affairs docket, said Ugandans connected to the national grid will also reach deeper into their pockets to pay for Bujagali power.*

Other dams in similar situations in Uganda

- Karuma dam – nearly completion, over 300 affected persons yet to be compensated / resettled.
- Isimba dam, submerged the Kalagal falls – agreed offset for Bujagali dam.
- Aswa dams (1, 2,) threatening over 2500 people with possible eviction.
- Aswa dams 3, 4, and 5) are yet to start in Northern Uganda.

Awoo village in Karuma – Uganda, Women suffer the cruel brut of dam projects evictions



Karuma dam affected communities members property being thrown out during evictions



The Chinese contractor manning evictions of community members

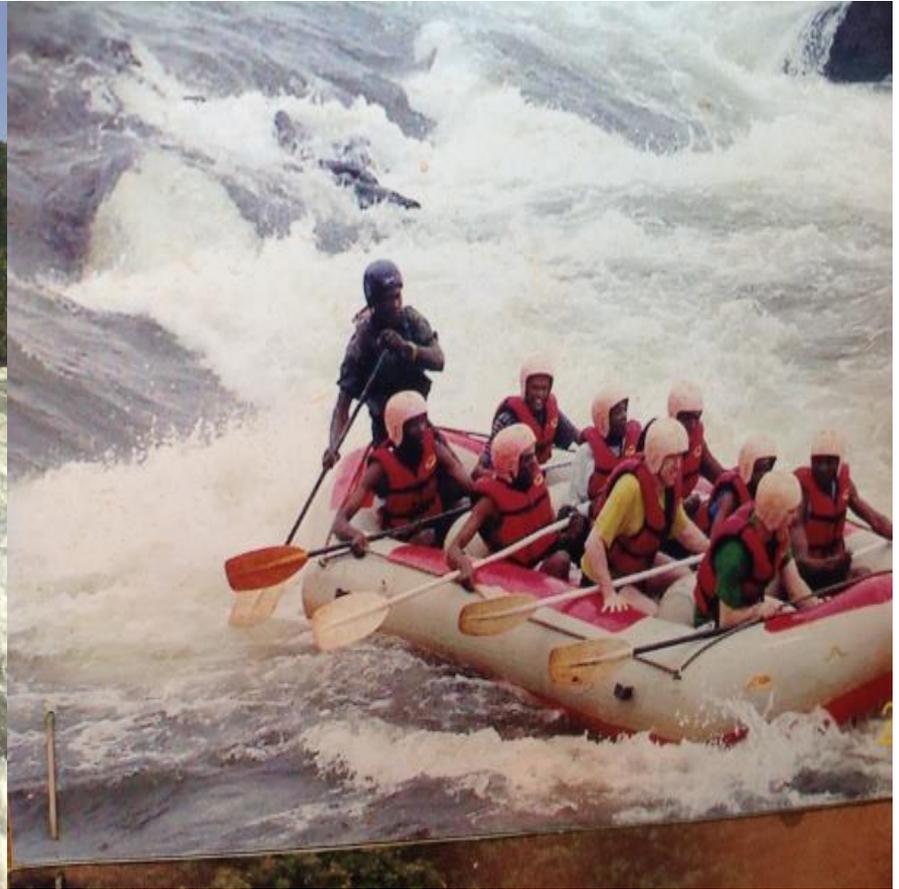




Destruction of rivers flow, ecology and tourism sites

- The rivers natural ecosystem is interfered with and activities upstream and down stream are affected
- The famous Bujagali and Karuma falls are and will be long gone. The income generated from tourism, research and study potentials are swept under the carpeted
- Flooding Kalagala by Isimba dam erased an important spiritual site and some of the world's best whitewater, which draws 50,000 a year and serves as a lifeline for thousands of Ugandans,

Academic study & research and tourism sites at former Bujagali falls are destroyed



Now the dammed lakes occupy the former spectacular falls



Interference with culture and traditions of indigenous populations

Jajja Bujagali – the Basoga Spiritual leader.



Why have dams continued to be built despite their negatives

- Political accountability as performance milestones to ask for more terms of leadership regardless of their real contribution to the society & devpt.
- They are easy means for undetectable corruption
Eg the cost of Bujagali of nearly 1,000 million dollars was x3 the same kind of dam elsewhere at the time, yet more USD 500 million has been loaned.
- The initial cost of 600 MW. Karuma dam of US \$1.7 billion jumped to US \$ 2.2 billion in comparison to **The 6000 MW Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** at a cost of **US \$6.4bn which has** the distinction of being Africa's largest dam.
Uganda is spendi 2.2 bn to get a tenth (1/10)

Why con'td

- Good business deals for banks the more they fund the more the money they make.
- Now the new and modern way of China colonizing Africa and better way to have Africa indebted by China yet doing substandard work in addition to making Africa dumping ground of all sorts of unworthy materials.

What needs to be done

- There is need for review of the Environmental Impact Assessment approach now in place.
- The dam developers being the ones to source and appoint EIA practitioners leaves a lot to be desired.
- It makes the EIA consultants obliged to give their employers a good deal of their money. A yes sir situation.
- It is a conflict of interest, it should change if we want to genuine and fair environmentally friendly sustainable development

- For God and my Country is my national motto, at FED, Little by little, together with people like you, we do our humble best to make the world a better place to live in.
- Thank you