



The 8th Nile Basin Development Forum

25-27 November 2026

Concept Note

INTRODUCTION

About the NBDF

The Nile Basin Development Forum (NBDF) is a regional science-policy-practice dialogue event organised by Member States of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) in partnership with development partners. Its purpose is to facilitate the exchange of information and perspectives on the actions required to achieve the sustainable development of the shared Nile Basin water resources.

Since its inception in 2006, the NBDF has been a regular NBI event, designed to bring together a wide range of stakeholders from within and beyond the Nile Basin. Its objective is to foster a shared understanding among policymakers, scientists, practitioners, and the public regarding the status of the region's common water and natural resource base, the complex challenges it faces, and the potential solutions to address water security concerns across Nile Basin countries

Target Audience

The NBDF targets Ministers responsible for Water Affairs and other government officials from Nile Basin countries; Members of Parliament; water resource managers; environmentalists; economists; development planners; academics and researchers; media representatives; river basin organisations; regional and international institutions; civil society organisations; women's and youth groups; and private sector actors.

Objective of NBDF

Objectives of NBDF are:

1. To provide a platform to exchange latest scientific information, knowledge and good practices in transboundary water resources management and development
2. To deliberate on opportunities, challenges and prospects in transboundary water cooperation
3. To build partnerships and networks among the various stakeholders in water resources management and development.

EIGHTH EDITION OF THE NBDF

Why NBDF 8 is Important

The 8th Nile Basin Development Forum (NBDF 8) offers a timely and strategic platform for inclusive dialogue and exchange of experience among Nile Basin stakeholders. It fosters mutual understanding, builds trust, and reinforces confidence among riparian countries, which are critical ingredients for cooperation on transboundary water management.

By convening decision-makers, technical experts, civil society, and development partners, NBDF 8 supports the identification of shared solutions for the optimal and sustainable development of the Nile Basin's water resources. Ultimately, this contributes to long-term peace, stability, and water security across the Nile Basin.

Gains over the Years

Since its evolution from the Nile 2002 Conferences, the Nile Basin Development Forum (NBDF) has become a cornerstone for fostering trust and confidence among riparian countries, enabling them to engage more openly and constructively on shared development goals. The Forum has played a catalytic role in advancing transboundary cooperation, which has increasingly become institutionalised, laying the foundation for joint action to close development gaps across the Basin in a sustainable and equitable manner.

The NBDF has also raised international awareness of the Nile Basin as a global asset of critical importance. It has helped frame Nile cooperation not just as a regional imperative, but as a shared global responsibility to steward one of the world's most vital transboundary water systems. No single country can, in isolation, safeguard the Basin's ecosystems and environmental services from degradation or the unintended consequences of uncoordinated development. The NBDF has consistently underscored the need for collective governance and joint investment to ensure the long-term sustainability of this common pool resource.

Ecologically, the Basin is home to biodiversity of global significance. It harbours endangered species such as the Nile lechwe, Nile crocodile, and hippopotamus, and supports the world's largest terrestrial mammal migrations, which rely on interconnected ecosystems in both the Eastern Nile and Nile Equatorial Lakes regions. The Basin also hosts major ecological assets such as the Sudd Wetlands — among the world's largest — and Lake Victoria, the second-largest freshwater lake globally. Its upper catchments are sanctuaries for rare species including the mountain gorilla in the Virunga Mountains and the Walia ibex in the Ethiopian highlands. These ecosystems not only support biodiversity but serve critical environmental functions and function as natural infrastructure sustaining livelihoods for millions.

On the socio-economic front, the Forum has consistently drawn attention to the Basin's immense development potential. Despite its vast natural resources, the region remains among the least developed in the world, with widespread poverty, low access to electricity (below 50% in most countries), and food insecurity. Many Basin countries are net food importers, even though the region has the capacity to become a continental food basket. The impacts of climate change, ranging from droughts and floods to shifting growing seasons, are exacerbating an already fragile situation. The NBDF has been instrumental in highlighting these challenges and rallying stakeholders around shared solutions.

Through its inclusive, knowledge-driven approach, the NBDF has emerged as a powerful instrument for dialogue, shared learning, and coordinated action, advancing cooperation, resilience, and sustainable development across the Nile Basin.

Theme and Sub-themes

Since 2006, seven NBDF events have been held, with the eighth edition (NBDF 8) scheduled to take place in November 2026 in Tanzania.

Theme

Building a resilient and inclusive Nile future: investing in people, innovation and cooperation for shared prosperity.

Sub themes

1. Investing in People

Women and Youth for a Sustainable Nile Basin

A central pillar of sustainable transboundary water management in the Nile Basin is investment in people. Women and youth make up the largest demographic across the Basin and are key actors in both the use and stewardship of its water and environmental resources. Women are closely connected to water through their roles in household management, food production, and caregiving. Their daily interaction with water resources gives them unique knowledge and perspectives that are essential to sustainable water governance. Similarly, youth are not only the future custodians of the Nile Basin but are also highly adaptable and technologically adept, offering fresh insights and innovative approaches to pressing water challenges. Ensuring meaningful participation of both women and youth in the Nile Basin Development Forum provides a unique opportunity to integrate their voices into regional dialogue and decision-making, enhancing equity, sustainability, and long-term impact.

Harnessing Technology for Integrated Water Resources Management

The Nile's water is finite, yet it must support a rapidly growing population and increasingly ambitious development goals. Business-as-usual approaches are no longer viable. Emerging technologies offer powerful tools to improve water use efficiency, strengthen monitoring and planning, and support evidence-based decision-making. Youth are well-positioned to drive this digital transformation due to their affinity with innovation and technological advancement. Their

involvement in technology-driven solutions — ranging from data analysis to mobile applications and modelling tools — can help unlock smarter, more adaptive approaches to IWRM across the Basin.

Strategic Partnerships with Academia and Civil Society

Academia and civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in bridging the gap between policy and practice. By engaging academic institutions and CSOs in the Forum and related processes, the Nile Basin Initiative is able to amplify grassroots voices, promote research-based solutions, and support more inclusive policy dialogue. These partnerships also help to strengthen the capacity of women, youth, and marginalised communities to participate meaningfully in Nile Basin cooperation.

Building Human Capacity for Transboundary Water Management

Human capacity is the most critical enabler of change. Yet, disparities in knowledge and technical expertise among professionals in different Nile riparian countries remain a barrier to effective and coordinated water governance. Transboundary water management is a new field, and its complexity calls for sustained investment in skills development. A mix of approaches is being applied — including formal training, e-learning, peer-to-peer exchanges, and institutional partnerships — to build and harmonise capacity across the region. In parallel, the Nile Basin Initiative continues to generate data, analytical tools, and policy guidance aimed at improving planning, cooperation, and decision-making. Together, these efforts contribute to building a cadre of well-informed practitioners who are equipped to manage shared resources sustainably, equitably, and efficiently.

2. Investment Financing

Addressing the pressing development and water security needs of the Nile Basin requires sustained and innovative financing. The scale and complexity of water infrastructure needs — ranging from storage and irrigation to flood control and hydropower — demand a shift beyond conventional funding models. This thematic area of the Nile Basin Development Forum seeks to explore practical solutions to bridge the financing gap and unlock investment for transformative, basin-wide projects.

Bridging the Gap: Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Nile Water Infrastructure

To meet the region's growing water-related demands, countries must increasingly look beyond traditional donor funding. This sub-theme focuses on tapping into new and emerging sources of capital, such as climate finance, green bonds, blended finance, and impact investment. These mechanisms not only offer potential for increased funding but also align investment with environmental and social co-benefits, key considerations for long-term sustainability and resilience.

Strengthening Public Finance and Attracting Private Investment

Government action remains essential in creating an enabling environment for sustainable investment. This sub-theme highlights the role of sound public financial management, regulatory reform, and targeted incentives in unlocking private sector engagement. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) offer a valuable model for risk sharing and leveraging public resources to attract commercial finance. Strengthened fiscal policy, transparency, and long-term planning are key to instilling investor confidence and driving capital towards priority water infrastructure.

From Projects to Pipelines: Enhancing Project Preparation and Bankability

A significant bottleneck in the Basin lies not in the lack of ideas, but in the shortage of bankable, investment-ready projects. This sub-theme addresses the critical need to move from isolated project concepts to robust, well-prepared investment pipelines. Focus areas include improving feasibility assessments, strengthening institutional capacity for project design, integrating environmental and social safeguards, and applying international best practices in project development. Enhancing bankability not only attracts financing; but also improves implementation success and impact.

3. Integrated Water Resources Management for Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Nile Basin

The Nile Basin is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including more frequent and severe floods, droughts, and temperature extremes. These events threaten lives, livelihoods, ecosystems, and water infrastructure across the region. Strengthening climate resilience and reducing disaster risk requires an integrated approach to water resources management—one that combines sound infrastructure planning, ecosystem-based strategies, and innovative technology. This thematic area of the Nile Basin Development Forum (NBDF) focuses on harnessing integrated water

resources management as a tool to adapt to a changing climate and build a more secure and resilient future for the Basin's people and ecosystems.

Climate-Proofing Nile Infrastructure: Design, Operation, and Coordination

As climate risks intensify, there is an urgent need to adapt both existing and planned infrastructure to withstand future variability and extremes. This sub-theme examines climate-proofing approaches, including incorporating climate risk assessments into infrastructure design, reinforcing the resilience of water storage and conveyance systems, and improving operational flexibility. Special emphasis is placed on the coordinated management of infrastructure built in cascade—such as dams and reservoirs across the Nile system—to optimise benefits and reduce downstream risks under uncertain climatic conditions.

Nature-Based Solutions for a Resilient Nile Basin

Natural ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, and floodplains play a vital role in buffering climate impacts. This sub-theme explores how nature-based solutions (NbS) can be integrated into IWRM strategies to enhance water availability, regulate flows, protect biodiversity, and reduce the risk of floods and droughts. By restoring and conserving natural infrastructure, countries can build resilience while also supporting livelihoods and biodiversity. Case studies and best practices from across the Basin will be shared to highlight the practical potential of NbS as cost-effective, adaptive solutions.

Harnessing Technology for Early Warning and Proactive Risk Management

Technological advances offer new opportunities for anticipating and responding to climate-related hazards. This sub-theme focuses on the use of tools such as satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, and hydrological models to strengthen early warning systems, improve disaster forecasting, and support proactive water management. Enhanced access to real-time data and predictive analytics can empower institutions and communities to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate shocks—saving lives and reducing long-term economic losses.

4. Shared Prosperity through Cooperative Water Management

Shared prosperity lies at the heart of Nile Basin cooperation. As countries face mounting challenges

related to water, food, energy, and climate security, the imperative to manage shared resources equitably and sustainably has never been greater. Integrated water resources management offers a pathway to inclusive growth, one that balances national interests with collective gains across the Basin. This thematic area of the Nile Basin Development Forum highlights how cooperation fosters mutual benefits, strengthens resilience, and promotes peace through shared development outcomes.

Water, Food, Energy, and Climate Security

Joint management of the Nile Basin's water resources underpins long-term security across multiple sectors. Coordinated actions — such as shared hydropower infrastructure, cross-border irrigation strategies, and climate-resilient watershed management — help ensure reliable access to water, sustainable food production, renewable energy generation, and environmental protection. By investing in infrastructure and systems that deliver basin-wide benefits, countries reduce vulnerability and enhance collective climate resilience.

Sustainable and Equitable Development

The Nile Basin offers enormous potential for sustainable development, but achieving this potential requires equitable access to and use of water resources. This includes recognising the needs of all Basin countries, including upstream and downstream users, and ensuring fair allocation that supports national development goals without harming others. Equitable cooperation reduces tensions, promotes trust, and unlocks opportunities for all riparian states.

Examples of Shared Benefits in Action

Hydropower with shared benefits: A hydropower project developed in one country can generate electricity while also stabilising river flows, enabling more reliable irrigation and agricultural productivity in downstream countries.

Joint early warning systems: Investment in basin-wide flood and drought early warning systems helps all countries better prepare for and respond to climate extremes, saving lives and reducing economic losses.

Collaborative watershed management: Joint efforts to rehabilitate degraded watersheds improve water quality, reduce sedimentation, and restore soil fertility across borders — supporting both environmental sustainability and agricultural development.

Inclusive Growth and Empowerment

Cooperation on the Nile must also be inclusive. Ensuring that benefits are widely shared — across countries, communities, and social groups — requires policies and practices rooted in fairness, sustainability, and empowerment. Integrated water resource management provides a framework for achieving this, enabling countries to jointly pursue growth that leaves no one behind.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Phase	Activity
Pre-Event	Launch of build-up to NBDF 8 and multimedia outreach
	Webinars, call for abstracts, and write shops (Detailed guide on conference topics to be published separately)
	Tree planting, shoreline and market clean-ups
	Mobilisation of high-level stakeholders and Nile champions
	Youth competitions – Hackathon
	Call for Nile Media Awards competition
During Event	Programme-based activities:
	Opening, business, and closing sessions
	Media Awards
	Youth Awards
Post-Event	Declaration of NBDF 8
	Evaluation of the event
	Report and proceedings of NBDF 8

Ways to participate

- Presenter.** Submit an abstract and present your paper at the Forum.
- Ordinary participant.** Register free of charge to be part of the virtual or physical audience at the Forum.
- Become a sponsor.** Make a financial or material contribution to the general organisation of the event. Sponsors will have their logos displayed on the Forum website and documents.
- Sponsor an award.** As a special category of sponsors, provide the cash prize for one or more categories of competition in the media or youth awards.
- Outdoor activities.** Take part in walks, runs, and other outdoor preparatory activities, or sponsor other persons to participate in such activities.
- Co-convenor.** Become a co-convenor of a selected session. Co-conveners contribute technical papers and join in planning and running technical sessions of the Forum.

- Exhibitor.** Pay for a booth and take part in exhibitions at the venue of the closing session.
- Side events.** Organise a side event at the closing, in collaboration with the Forum Secretariat ■

Key Milestones	Date
Selection of theme, sub-themes, concept note and logo development	Jul - 25
Formation of regional and national organising committees and sub-committees	Aug - 25
Announcement of NBDF 8	April - 26
First announcement and call for Abstracts & Media Awards Entries	Aug - 26
Formal launch of NBDF 8	Aug - 26
Virtual webinars (4 weeks)	Oct - 26
Charity walks, runs, area clean-ups and other preparatory activities	Sept – Nov - 2026
Physical closing event: technical sessions, panel discussions, ministerial roundtables, forum declaration, closing ceremony, media, and youth awards	Nov - 26