

## BRICS Response to South Africa's Water Crisis

Water is the most important resource on Earth. Many people, especially in first world countries, take water's availability and accessibility for granted. Apart from sustaining a rich diversity of natural ecosystems, the region's water resources are critical for meeting the basic needs related to water supplies for domestic and industrial requirements, and for sanitation and waste management for about 200 million people. Worldwide, 1.8 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water (de Albuquerque). In Africa, 64% of the population depends on non-reliable resources for water, and even today "more than 400 million Africans now live in water-scarce countries; 300 million people still do not have reasonable access to safe drinking water and nearly 230 million people defecate in the open" (Vidal). Additionally, climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa appears to have brought about worsening droughts over the last 20 years. Many streams and lakes are drying up or becoming low enough to have their water quality adversely affected by human and animal waste and disease (Hendrix). This leads to lack of drinking water as well a lack of water in which to bathe and wash and further contributes to illness and infection (Hendrix). Finally, population growth resulting from influx of all the refugees from neighboring countries puts even more of a strain the water crisis. The refugee population in Ethiopia grew by almost 200,000 refugees just within the year of 2013 and surged to 686,000 in 2014 (Europa). This population influx has been a huge burden to these nations as they struggle to provide both, water and other necessities to their inhabitants as well as the growing numbers of refugees. The universal strains concerning water create hostility and affect the peacebuilding efforts on the African continent. To mitigate these strains, it is essential to have both governmental and nongovernmental response from South African and from the other BRICS nations to present viable, peaceful development solutions to Africa's water crisis.

To safeguard sustainable access to satisfactory quantities of acceptable quality water for not only sustaining livelihoods and socio-economic development, but also for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution, water-related disasters, and preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace there needs to exist an international effort into the introduction of infrastructure development. Scarcity of safe water is a hindrance to each of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) created at the United Nations' Millennium Summit in 2000 (Torrent) When water related issues hinder the

expansion of these goals, the countries involved cannot become more advanced but instead either stagnate or become worse off. As UN Water Project, Water for Life states:

Water is at the core of sustainable development...vital for reducing the global burden of disease and improving the health, welfare and productivity of populations. It is central to the production and preservation of a host of benefits and services for people. Water is also at the heart of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between the climate system, human society and the environment. (UN Water).

Without accessible safe water, the community will not be able to be sustaining to itself because nonhazardous water is essential for long-term infrastructure development. This creation of streamlined systems allow for the cooperative management of shared watercourses within the region and harmonization of national water sector management to facilitate integration and achieve the targets between States (SADC, Water). Since the next interstate wars are going to be fought over the ownership of water resources, mitigating these threats by collective ownership is indispensable. Having shared responsibility over water infrastructure systems gives the opportunity to the providers, collectors, and the consumers to jointly focus more on providing for their people's water needs and less about who owns the water.

In a 2013 report released by Standard Charter Bank on the Sustainable Development Index of emerging global powers, South Africa came in 31st out of 31 (Sumner, 4). This last place ranking was in large part due to the drop in life expectancy over the past 12 years and the low sustainability of South Africa's natural environment for the long-term future (Sumner, 5). Despite the importance of water in the region there is, presently, no long-term policy and strategy for the development and management of the region's water resources, and in particular the management of trans-boundary watercourse systems. This is because of many reasons: there is weak legal and regulatory framework, inadequate institutional capacities of national water authorities, poor information acquisition and low levels of awareness, education and training with respect to the economic, social, environmental and political issues related to water resources development and management (UNEP). Recently however, South Africa's narrative of water as an instrument for peace, cooperation and regional integration has been making a difference.

There are promises for the advancement of South Africa, and other African nations low rankings. Today, government institutions from South Africa who have resources and money have placed themselves in leadership roles for regional infrastructure development. The creation of the South Africa Development Community has been working within the African region since 1993

(SADC, Initiative). The original Declaration calls upon all countries and people of Southern Africa to develop a vision of a shared future, a future within a regional community that will ensure economic well being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life for the peoples of Southern Africa (SADC, Initiative). This effort was expanded when other regional economic entities joined South African Development Community to promote sustainable infrastructure. In 2010, the African Union Commission, which is led by South Arica, in partnership with NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, proposed and officially created the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) (Maupin). The PIDA itself has been proposing a common framework of integration for infrastructures to be developed on the continent. As such, the proposal's foreword specifies, "implementing PIDA will require solid co-ordination structures and mobilizing all relevant funding sources, both public and private...we invite Africa's various development partners and the private sector to consider supporting PIDA's delivery" (Maupin). Also for example Veolia, as a small-scale solution, was created to treat water in South Africa community by community. This project demonstrates the capacity for communities to find their own solutions, and spread smaller projects to the large-scale overtime.

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However, governments themselves cannot do it all. The help of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) has made significant difference in water development because of the ability to integrate of many different governments together and fund loftier projects easier. One program, established in South Africa in June 2000 and founded on the principles of the South Africa Development Community (SADC), is the Global Water Partnership (Maupin). In the past fifteen years of Global Water Partnership-South Africa (GWPSA), GWPSA has grown into a regional network of over 300 partner organizations in 12 of the SADC countries. The partnership has been focused primarily on the promotion of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles (GWP). This effort has raised the level of awareness of an IWRM approach among the local and regional decision-makers and has been able to inspire legal policy changes at all governing levels. GWPSA's competitive strength lies in its capacity to bring together stakeholders and mobilize a platform for regional and national stakeholders to come together to facilitate access to IWRM knowledge, bridging knowledge gaps, and providing vehicles for stakeholder consultation (GWP). This is critical for the expansion of technical expertise as well as improving financing for the projects. The GWP-Technical Committee, consisting of 13 internationally recognized professionals selected for their experience in different disciplines relating to integrated water resources management, continues to generate technical knowledge for lawmakers and policy experts (GWP). This high quality, peer-reviewed and evidence-based information on water resource practitioners has culminated in yearly reports that have informed and directed aid from both the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Union Water Initiative-Finance Working Group. In a recent new focus, financing has allowed GWPSA, together with the World Water Council (WWC) and World Water Forum, to set up high-level panels, Financing Water for All, a program chaired by Michel Camdessus, the former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (Maupin). All together, the Global Water Project—South Africa has brought together many government and funds to establish partnerships and platforms to which to bring stakeholders.

With Africa being touted as the final development frontier and with developed countries and advanced emerging economies competing for both the African market and political influence, it makes sense that African development remains one of the priority agenda items within BRICS so as to give the BRICS members themselves a competitive edge. All together, external aid from the BRICS's governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to the African continent makes up a significant portion of African nations' investment, monetary, and relief assistance (IISD).

The growing position of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on the African scene offers new development opportunities for the continent. Governmental assistance whether physically monetary aid, privileged investment, or trade benefits allows the remaining BRICS nations to establish new relations with the continent. China, as the largest and fastest growing international power has been able to give the most aid to the African continent. Chinese assistance in African countries has existed since the beginning of the 1960s when the United States and the USSR were too involved with their own spheres of influence to capitalize (Maupin). It is from the 1990s onwards that China truly began to invest on the continent with, today, over 900 infrastructure development projects (IISD). Chinese financial resources for foreign aid are essentially of three types: subsidies, interest-free loans and soft loans. The first two come from State finances, while the Import-Export Bank of China supplies soft loans (Xiaoyun). Today, China is the first trading partner in Africa, and in June 2013 announced the launch of two additional investment funds within the framework of the China-Africa Business Council (CABC) and the China-Africa Development Fund (Xiaoyun). Both funds should gather close to 1 billion USD each, and aim to stimulate the investments of Chinese companies (from the trading and mining sectors) by supplying them with capitals.

Up until the beginning of the 1990s, the USSR was only involved in Africa as a supporter of political regimes, no economic contributions. However, after the Soviet Union fell, Russia reinvested on the continent. Recently, Russian companies have started to settle in African countries for to enlarge their sphere of influence. For example, Russian company, Rosatom is on the way to building the first nuclear plants in Egypt and Nigeria (Maupin). Fighting for water infrastructure and energy policy, are part of the sectors targeted by Russian aid, which operates under a number of ministries, particularly the Ministry of Finances, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Economic Development (UNEP). Recently, an agency of the Russian government has even specialized in co-operation with the African continent. The Rossotrudnichestvo [8], set up in London in 2008 was put in charge of overseas assignments including proposed several elements to improve its international development aid with cancelling the debts of African countries, opening duty-free trade, and learning establishments such as exhibitions and conferences (Chesnokov). In response to Africa's water problems, the creation of a development agency (of the RusAID type) was officially proposed in 2007, however it has not come into existence yet (Chesnokov). This development agency is much looked forward to because not only would it be beneficial to Russia's political and social influence in the region, but it would also stimulate Russia's economic aid contributions and bring Russia's external policy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While India and Brazil have had growing funds over the past few years, they're not as competent as China or Russia on large-scale projects because of the lack of the blank check, pure

monetary assistance needed. While there is not much that the countries can give, there are two benefits for both India and Brazil: the fact that in 2012 their position as the recipients of international aid came to an end or took a severe cut respectively and the creation of national development partnership agencies (Dube). A positive that India and Brazil bring to the African negotiation table is a similar background story. With a similar colonialism and development aid background, both can speak honestly with African nations about struggles and missed or fulfilled promises (Dube). The national development partnerships are also important to South African aid promises. Brazil's aid, which emphasizes South-South co-operation and bilateral agreements, has been important to co-development in both countries. And, more recently, India's newly created the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) with the energy sector taking the lead in DPA-led projects (Dube). Today, both India and Brazil are trying to take on a wider perspective concerning South-South partnerships on environmental, technological and other issues within the framework of her commercial interests. However, without availability of funds, there is little that both countries can do to promote democracy and help build large-scale water sustainability projects.

BRICS are unavoidable investors. China and Brazil are obvious shareholders on the continent when it comes to the larger goals, but all five are helpful in their own ways and particular spheres of influence. The largest project shared by the BRICS countries is the founding of the New BRICS Development Bank. This bank is developed to grow economic strength within BRICS countries and start to outpace their voice at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This South-South economic cooperation has expanded dramatically in recent years because of this (Dube).

Besides the BRICS, there are many other international entities that have specific interests in many African nations whether because of colonialism, natural resource availability, or partnership opportunity. The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), a World Bank group, has been concentrating half of its insurance activity between various projects on the African continent (UNEP). As such, MIGA's "insured" implement infrastructure development projects match World Bank specifications, are multilateral and multinational, and also favor South-South co-operation, strongly associating the BRICS, and South Africa in particular (UNEP).

In November 2012, the US decided to jump into the development aid to African nations area by launched its 'Doing Business in Africa' campaign. The US Department of Commerce is spearheading the initiative, but involves other agencies like the Overseas Private Investment Agency Corporation who will assist with the establishment of the US-Africa Clean Energy Development and Finance Center in Johannesburg, amongst others (USAID). Like the BRICS, America is focusing on clean

energy and development, coordinating its resources with the US private sector, local development banks and private banks. For example, the US Agency for International Development is working to establish a South African Development Partnership Agency, an assistance program to be managed as part of USAID-South African Government's bilateral work (USAID).

The growth of development aid from the BRICS countries and NGOs in the 21st century is a fact. But the implications of that fact depend on knowing many more details about how much is given, the type of development aid given and under what terms, as well as the rationales of the BRICS countries for their assistance. There are options for the furthering of development in the region including opening up more Regional Development, specifically water related development bank. Also, the rise of NGOs has been helpful, but many get lost in the world. One recommendation would be to make sure the NGOs have funding from reliable networks before going into Africa, especially South Africa. Last, the rise of micro-financing in India and Brazil has allowed for the rise of small-scale governmental assistance, this is something that all BRICS governments should invest in. The micro-financing can change the water problems because it would give options for small African nations to gain support from BRICS countries, without full intervention.

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