

**Session II – Envisioning New Approaches to Managing Great Deltas, Great Rivers,
and Great Lakes**
11:40 AM

**Impacts of River Impoundments: The Case of Hydro Power Projects on Omo River
of Lake Turkana**

William Ojwang Oweke¹, Ojuok, J.E., Omondi, R., Malala, J., Abila, R., and P. Ikmat

¹Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Kisumu Research Centre, Kisumu,
Kenya, Email: w_ojwang@yahoo.com

Abstract

River Omo, a transboundary natural resource of immense value to both Ethiopia and Kenya, is currently the subject of intense debate on envisaged consequences of ongoing and planned development projects. This paper reviews possible environmental, socio-economic and, specifically, fisheries impacts of the construction of the hydroelectric dams on the GilgelGibe/Omo river on the larger Lake Turkana and the riparian communities. Imminent impacts include regulated river flows thus reducing frequent devastating floods characteristic of the lower Omo plains and other proposed socioeconomic interventions, reduction of the Omo delta wetlands used by fish for breeding, nursery and refugia; loss of the highly productive delta fertile soil and naturally irrigated livestock grazing fields, enhanced environmental vicissitudes from reduced freshwater influx affecting fisheries productivity, and loss of livelihoods and income for the riparian communities and the country respectively. We note that the Lake Turkana situation is dire and the time is apt for establishment of transboundary consultative fora to address resource use conflicts, undertake rapid surveys on the delta and propose mitigation measures on the anticipated impacts. The Omo River delta and the larger Lake Turkana ecosystem is a gift to our heritage and deserve better approaches that guarantee their sustainability.