



Social Exclusion,  
Struggles for  
Inclusion, and  
Transnational  
Solidarity in the  
Inga Hydropower  
Project

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## **Abstract**

This chapter explores the political economy of the Inga Hydropower Project (IHP), and the role played by the Cold War, the international financial institutions, and the development agencies in the project. The IHP has been largely characterised by a lack of transparency from its inception to further development. The project has been harmful in several ways: the destruction of livelihoods of the dam-affected communities; repayment of debts which did benefit a small group of political and economic elites; and the structural exclusion of the Congolese population from accessing electricity. The lack of understanding and transparency from the DRC government, and the absence of consultation with and compensation to the dam-affected communities and the Congolese population in general pushes Congolese civil society organisations to build alliances with the transnational civil society organisations which in turn presents opportunities and other challenges. To be effective in their struggles for participatory democracy and fair resource sharing on the one hand, and continuing to receive outside funding because there are no funding opportunities from within, DRC civil society organisations need to protect the interests of Congolese people and country, and at the same time, fit into the framework of transnational civil society organisations' networks.

## Introduction

“Who might tell us that these falls, which are now an obstacle may not become one day, a force, a dynamic generator of electricity?” (Wauters, 1885).

The Inga Hydropower Project (IHP) has been and continues to be a source of both controversy and hope since its inception in 1965. It continues to evoke conflicting emotions and will continue to do so both in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), previously known as Zaire, and outside this country. There are two reasons for this. First, there is the potential of the IHP, once completed to become the biggest hydropower plant in the world. The IHP is also recognised as being one of the most detrimental dams to indigenous communities of the area because of the destruction of their livelihoods, the lack of consultation with and compensation of the affected communities, repayment of debts incurred in its construction which did not inclusively benefit the Congolese people, and the structural exclusion of the Congolese people from electricity provision. Second, the IHP is harmful to the environment and the ecosystems along the Congo River in particular.

The Inga Hydropower is therefore a typical case of the accumulation of natural resources by the political and economical elites and their foreign allies by dispossessing and impoverishing poor and ordinary citizens who need them the most. As a result, Congolese civil society organisations are forced to organise themselves in order to survive, to defend their interests and those of the Congolese people in general, and to negotiate some space for interrogating national elites’ political and economic power and consequently the purpose of the IHP as a tool of development. Civil society organisations use different strategies, depending on the constraints and opportunities presented to them, in order to promote a fair re-distribution of the IHP revenues and public participation in planning and following up of important decisions which affect people’s lives. In fact, from “everyday forms of resistance including grumbling and gossip, laughter and laziness...” (Scott, 2002: 89), non-vio-

lent protest marches often repressed by the state, to court cases around the IHP, civil society organisations, which have been and continue to be active in their struggles for inclusion, have forged the redistribution of wealth generated by the IHP. When necessary, Congolese civil society organisations build alliances with transnational solidarity in order to lobby the institutions, development agencies, and individual investors to attach some strings to the assistance that they bring to the DRC. In fact, the international assistance is always accompanied with subordination to and the supremacy of civil society organisations from the north and relatively developed countries from the south including South Africa.

This chapter argues that Congolese civil society organisations are in a difficult position. On the one hand, there is the repressive DRC government and its international allies which impoverish people. On the other hand, there are certain authoritarian transnational civil society organisations with the hegemonic agendas of their governments, which undermine the DRC civil society's capacity building. The DRC therefore needs visionary civil society organisations capable of forging strong international solidarity on the behalf of the dam-affected communities and the Congolese people in general, and to some extent satisfying the interests of these hegemonic organisations in order to attract funding.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section Two, which follows the introduction, will outline the history of the Inga Hydropower Project. Section Three deals with the impacts of the project on both people and the environment. Section Four reveals the role of civil society organisations in the decision making process around the project. Section Five presents the conclusion and some reflections on the way forward.

## **The Inga Hydropower Project**

This section begins with the historical background of the IHP. It then looks at the funding involved. Lastly, the section will elaborate on the capacity of the two phases and their social and environmental impacts.

### **Background of the project**

The IHP concession – including Inga I and Inga II, and future sites for Inga III and Grand Inga – consists of 21,000 Ha (World Bank, 2007: 23). It is located in Bas Congo, on the Congo River, 150 km upstream from the mouth of the river, and 225 km down stream from Kinshasa. Its flow (40,000 m<sup>3</sup>/second) and basin with its affluents (3,8 millions km<sup>2</sup>) make the Congo River the biggest in the world after the Amazon River. This is because the river flows from one side of the Equator to the other in such a way that when it is the dry season in the north, it is the rainy season in the south, and vice versa. As a result, the Congo River has a regular flow from January to December of each year. In addition to the hydrographical importance of the Congo River, the Inga Falls site presents a natural denivelation of 105 metre on 15 km straight distance making the site most appropriate for a megadam project (di Panzu, 2006: 9).

In 1925, Colonel Pierre van Deuren was the first scientist to realise the potential of the Inga Falls site in his study of the Congo River waterway between Matadi and Kinshasa. Van Deuren concluded that the plan should include seven lock-dams with a hydropower dam. He applied to the Department of Colonies to undertake a feasibility study of a project called the *Syndicat pour l'Electrification du Bas-Congo, SYNEBA*, (the Union for the Electrification of Bas Congo). The project's findings in 1932 disassociated navigation between Matadi and Kinshasa from the hydropower potential of the Inga Falls. But the construction work of the hydropower dam project was postponed because of the outbreak of World War I and World War II. The post-war

economic boom resulted in an increased need for energy in the country that only the Inga Falls site could provide. As a result, in 1946 le *Syndicat pour le Développement de l'électrification du Bas Congo*, SYDELCO, (the Union for the Development of the Electrification of Bas-Congo) was created which led to the Zongo Hydropower Project which was planned to supply electricity to Kinshasa. Once the Zongo Hydropower Project was completed, the Congo would deal with the Inga Project. The SYDELCO's research findings were sold to the Department of Colonies in 1955 (Zimmer, 2007: 17-19).

In 1957, the Institute of Inga was created by royal decree. It was followed, in the same year, by the creation of an International Committee of Belgian academics, engineers, and consultants to study and make concrete proposals on the Inga Project to the Belgian government, confirming or rejecting the 1955 findings. The SYDELCO's findings supported the 1955 findings. They recommended, however, the development of heavy industries in the Inga Falls Area in the same manner as in the Ruhr Region in Germany, le Sillon Sambre-Meuse in Belgium, and East America. Inga Falls become a very important site because of its abundant energy potential and its close location to natural resources. The Inga Project was intended to supplement electricity to Kinshasa because the Zongo Hydropower Project's production was not enough for the expanding capital city. In 1959, the Public Establishment of Inga was created, and a Project Manager was put in charge of building and operating the power plants (Zimmer, 2007: 17-19; Mukadi, 2006).

After independence, the Inga Project was re-examined by the Inga Institute and Zairian government which negotiated funding from the World Bank for phase I of the project. The World Bank was reluctant to endorse the project. It requested that an aluminium smelter be built close to the Inga Project before making any funds available. On the other hand, the investors of the aluminium smelter were waiting funding, which was to come available on the completion of the Inga plant, before going ahead with their project. This vicious circle of a lack of funding before securing the market for the electricity from the Inga Project; and the lack of market before building the Inga Project, delayed the construction work for three years. Eventually, in 1963, Cafarelli, an Italian company joined the Inga Project with the plan of an import-substitution programme instead of exporting the DRC electricity. Cafarelli suggested that the project should be used as a development node under the auspices



of SICAI, an Italian-DRC company. SICAI came forward with new ideas suggesting that rather than becoming a development node the project should be associated with a steel mill, the Maluku Steel Mill Project, and a fertiliser plant for the DRC market.

Parallel to this negotiation, there was disagreement between experts around the economic justification of the Inga Project. On the one hand, there were the sceptical proponents of the Inga Project, namely the SICAI group, which contended in 1964 that “the benefits anticipated, direct or indirect, are not proportional to the investment and that it would be more interesting for the DRC to invest in installations producing for the domestic market” (Mukadi, 2006). On the other hand, there were the opponents of the Inga Project including experts from the European Economic Community who suggested that the DRC should first invest in public security, social and economic infrastructures including schools, hospitals, and roads and then move to ambitious projects such as Inga. The two diverging schools of thought, however, agree on the fact that the IHP should target the domestic market rather than external electricity consumers outside of the project. Eventually and in the interests of the company they represented, the supporters of the project won the battle in 1965 and SICAI was awarded the contract for construction work which was completed in 1972. Inga II was then commissioned in 1982 (Zimmer, 2007: 22; Mukadi, 2006).

### **Funding Institutions and Funding Related Issues**

The Inga I Project was funded by the European Economic Commission through the European Investment Bank, despite the Commission’s recommendation to the Zairian government to invest in public security, and social and economic infrastructures which would have direct benefits for the Zairian people. Funding for Inga I was triggered by Mobutu’s military coup in 1965 which brought him to power and occasioned the release of a large amount of funding in order to support Mobutu’s ambitions of building the biggest hydropower in the Congo and Africa. In fact, the first loan of US\$ 16.5 million was released by the European Investment Bank at 2 per cent interest, repayable over 10 years. In addition to this funding, there was a non-repayable grant of US\$ 9.0 million in 1969 and another loan for the same project of US\$ 9million. The initial estimated cost of US\$ 16.5 million was increased to US\$ 34.5 million by 1969 (Zimmer, 2007: 22). The Inga II Project was mainly funded by loans of US\$ 460 million from European and American private banks whereas the Inga-Shaba Power Highway, a joint and “white elephant project” attached to Inga II,

was funded with US\$ 850 million. Indeed, the Inga-Shaba Power Highway was intended to transport the electricity from the Inga II Falls site to GECAMINES in the Katanga Province with the intention of controlling this province suspected of secessionist ambition. The Eximbank was one of the main funders of the Inga-Shaba Power Highway. Other funders and their contributions are not known (Zimmer, 2007: 22).

However, the first repair work of the Turbines 2 and 3 of Inga I Project occurred in 1982. Funding and equipment for these turbines were provided by Italian companies whereas the rehabilitation work was carried out by *Electrobeton*. There was no public call for proposals such as the case for the current rehabilitation. In contrast to Inga I, Inga II needed its first repairs in less than ten years because of technical faults and breakdowns of turbines 1, 2, and 3 (Mukadi, 2006). The second round of repairs of Inga I and Inga II will be funded by the European Investment Bank with a US\$50 million loan (Hathaway, 2008), and the African Development Bank with a US\$ 58 million grant (African Development Bank, 2008) as MagEnergy lost its contracts with SNEL on 12/04/2008 (*Société Nationale d'Electricité*, 2008). There was no transparency around the call for proposals for construction work or funding for Inga I and Inga II since the project was politically motivated by Mobutu's critical place and role in the Cold War. In fact, western powers had invested substantial amounts of money in this project in order to support Mobutu's ambitions in Africa and the region in particular which becomes and remains a tool against the expansion of socialism from central Africa. The IHP was also motivated by an ardent desire for self-enrichment of Mobutu's regime and his western allies from massive projects without transparency or accountability. As a result, from a poor and unclear family background, Mobutu became one of the richest individuals in the world after few years in power whereas the country was getting poorer.

### **Construction Work and Capacity of Inga I and Inga II**

Construction on Inga I began in 1965 and was completed in 1972. It has 6 turbines of which 2 now need a second rehabilitation. Mobutu recommended that the initial capacity of the Inga I of 150 MW be increased to 350 MW. This was done without any technical or sound economic considerations in order to satisfy the need of *Kaiser*, an American aluminium company, which expressed an interest in building a plant at the Inga site. Yet, once the Inga I was completed, Kaiser pulled out without

warning. The IHP's focus then shifted from the aluminium production to the Maluku Steel Mill Project as an import substitution programme, which needs only 50 MW (Zimmer, 2007: 24; Mukadi, 2006). This was another economically unsuccessful project because it is located at 2000 km from the iron ore in the Province Oriental - Isiro without any adequate transport link between them. In addition, the production capacity of 220,000 tons exceeds the demand of the DRC of 60,000 tons. As a result of this bad planning and the interference of politics in the developmental projects, the Maluku Steel Mill ended up by relying on imported scrap metal. Maluku steel was therefore more expensive than imported steel. The project was not competitive and so it closed down (Zimmer, 2007: 24; Mukadi, 2006).

Inga II was recommended by Mobutu before the completion and inauguration of Inga I in 1972. Inga II has 8 turbines and a capacity of 1.424 MW. Its costs increased from the estimated US\$ 260 million in 1974 to US\$ 460 million in 1982. It is intended to supply GECAMINES with 100 MW through the 1,800 km Inga-Shaba Power Highway Project at the cost of US\$ 850 million instead of constructing a small US\$ 65 million hydropower plant in the region (Zimmer, 2007: 26). Inga II and its associated Inga-Shaba Power Highway Projects were, like Inga I and the Maluku Steel Mill, economic failures in several ways. Indeed, the direct current power highway supplies electricity only at the destination leaving Kikwit, Kananga, and Kamina cities over which the lines pass, without electricity. In addition, the Inga-Shaba Power Highway Project provided only 636 jobs out of the 4,000 that were promised. Lastly, only 6 percent of the IHP electricity is used in the DRC whereas the rest is sold to other countries without a clear accounting system (Zvomuya, 2007).

The first two phases of the IHP were characterised - like several other projects in Zaire including the Maluku Steel Mill, *le Domaine Agricole Presidential*, *la Cite de la Voix du Zaire*, and others - by the strong interference of politics in developmental projects. In fact, the Maluku Steel Mill was located 2000 km from iron ore without roads or rails for transportation of raw materials. As a result of this bad planning, the products of this mill could not compete with cheaper imported materials. *Le Domaine Agricole Presidential de la N'sele* (Presidential Agricultural Project) was based in an area with poor soil, which was unsuitable for such activities. The project was then to transport topsoil from other regions thereby increasing the production costs. Imported tomato paste from Italy and chickens imported from other countries

including South Africa and France were cheaper than local products. *La Cite de la Voix du Zaire* (Radio and Television Tower), a masterpiece of French technology was never completed. What is more, the Radio and Television Tower has no air conditioning or lift, let alone qualified personnel for maintenance.

Willem (1986: 115, cited in Zimmer, 2007: 25) then concluded, and I agree with him, that “No investment made in Zaire in the 1970s was based on economic considerations. Talking about project economics has no sense at all. Everything is politics”. In fact, most of these investments occurred at the height of the Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, Mobutu was trained as the principal agent whose mission it was to stop or slowdown the expansion of socialism in Africa from central Africa. As a result of this position, Mobutu was given substantial amounts of money through “white elephant projects” from which he could steal and give privileges to his allies, friends, and relatives without any accountability.

## **The Impacts of the Inga Hydropower Project on the Environment and Society**

The IHP has considerable direct and indirect impacts on the dam-affected indigenous communities and Congolese people general.

### **Direct Impacts of the Inga Hydropower Project**

Direct impacts include the following:

- Destruction of the livelihoods of more than 8,000 people according to a clan representative representative and City Manager of Kinshasa Camp or 4,362 according to the DRC government (SAFRICO, 2006: 89). Local communities were displaced from their place of birth to what the dam affected communities call “concentration camps” without any form of consultation with or compensation to the victims;
- Lack of a sanitation and enough clean water in Kinshasa Camp which was built to house the personnel of different companies involved in the construction of the two phases of the IHP. Residents – adults and children, men and women – used to use the bush for their basic needs. As for water, there is only one tap for 4,362 (or 8,000 people depending of the source). What is more, water is only available from 11 pm to 5 am when SNEL personnel on the hill are not using water;
- Lack of the right to bury their relatives in the camp or improve their accommodation. Residents must occupy the wooden cabins as they are i.e. broken with leaking roofs without any attempts at repairs or improvements;
- Health problems (the incidence of river blindness, *sleeping sickness*, malaria, and bilharzia). The affected communities claim that these diseases were caused by the dam reservoir. Although there is no evidence to support these allegations, it is possible that the increase of malaria and bilharzia can be attributed the dam reservoir and the lack of strong current;

- Dispossession of land and water from the indigenous communities. Water and land are the most basic assets of rural communities. Dispossession of water and land from the poor, impoverishes the indigenous people, and makes them more vulnerable to risks. Indeed, the Inga Project has taken land which was used for agriculture and grazing; water which was used for fishing and domestic use; and forest which was used for hunting and craftwork away from the local communities and consequently destroyed their livelihood; and
- Endemic unemployment in the area. People argue that they are not happy with the current recruitment policies that SNEL utilises. SNEL has impoverished the dam-affected communities and continues to do so by importing labour from Kinshasa and Matadi even for positions which can be easily filled by the local people.

### **Indirect Impacts of the Inga Hydropower Project**

Unlike direct impacts, indirect impacts affect people without the victims sometimes realising it. These impacts include:

- Hardship of debts repayment. Repayment of debts [and their arrears – US\$ 4,622 millions used in the Inga I and Inga II plants represented 32.9 percent of the total debts of Zaire in 1981. In fact, debt repayments, the strings attached to these debts, and the lack of both the political will and sound management strategies did not allow the Zairian government to settle these loans;
- Pressure from the international financial institutions, the developmental agencies and other institutions involved in these schemes does not leave room for manoeuvre for the DRC government to invest in social and economic infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, and roads. As a result, the people of the DRC are trapped in a vicious cycle of poor performance at work because of poor health;
- Lack of access to clean water and electricity, and the subsequent occurrence of waterborne diseases. There is a shortage of clean water in the DRC because of a lack of electricity. Indeed, only 6 percent of the IHP electricity is used in the DRC. The rest is sold outside the country. From Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC to cities and villages, the majority of the population does not have access to clean water because of the lack of electricity which is much needed to treat water.

The IHP is an example of illegitimate debts.

Illegitimate debts include odious debts, loans secured through corruption, usurious loans, and certain debts incurred under inappropriate structural adjustment conditions... debts incurred by illegitimate debtors and creditors acting illegitimately (i.e. odious debt or debt occurred not for the needs or interests of the state but to strengthen a despotic regime and repress the population that fights against it), debts incurred for illegitimate uses (i.e. debts for projects which did not happen or did not benefit the people as they were intended, debt for projects which were destructive to the community or its environment, debt contracted for fraudulent purposes), debts incurred for illegitimate terms (i.e. debt incurred with usurious interest rates, debt that become unpayable as a result of external factors over which debtors have no control, or private loans converted to public debts under duress in order to bail out the lenders) (Kalima-Phiri, 2005: 10-13).

As a result of this definition and, considering the harmful impacts of these debts to the country and the people of DRC, civil society organisations need to lobby their international counterparts and advocate for debt cancellation with the intention of making more funds available for social services.

## **Citizens' Participation and Roles of Civil Society Organisations**

This section presents hope and disappointment of the dam-affected communities in their struggles for social and environmental justice. It includes the lack of consultation, local activism and international solidarity for the victims of the IHP, authoritarianism.

### **Lack of Consultation and Compensation, and Unfulfilled Promises**

There has never been any proper consultation with the dam-affected communities or the DRC population at large around the IHP. The only time when the project officials spoke to the local communities was between 1952 and 1953 when the Belgian colonial administration began to talk about the Inga Project and the possibility of forcibly displacing indigenous people from the Inga Falls site and subsequent claims for compensation. These attempts were abandoned during the social and political instability of the 1960s. One of the dam-affected communities' representatives introduced the claim for compensation in 1969 when the political situation was stabilised. He was told that compensation was no longer possible because the Kingdom of Belgium had made the Inga Falls site a state property (Malanda, 2008). In addition, the 32 years of Mobutu's dictatorship have been detrimental for any form of claim by the dam-affected communities. Yet, the dam-affected communities made unsuccessful claims for compensation from 1972 to 1975. They reiterated their claim in 1992 at Sovereign National Conference, again in vain. In 2007, they changed their strategies. They unsuccessfully made another claim through the Governor of Bas Congo and this year, they took the matter to the National Parliament and the Presidency of the DRC.

The IHP promised schools, clinics, and job opportunities for the local communities in order to improve their standard of living. These promises have not been kept



because the project did not build affordable, let alone free schools or clinics for the local people. The IHP instead built a school and modern clinic for the *SNEL* personnel. These infrastructures are so expensive that the local communities cannot afford to educate their children or pay for their health care. As a result, between 400 and 600 children of all ages have no access to school because their parents cannot afford to pay the school fees. What is more, the clinic built for the *SNEL* employees is out of reach of the local people because treatment is too expensive.

Regarding job opportunities brought by the project, only 30 people from the local communities were employed in the project as security guards or temporary workers. The limited number of jobs allocated to the local communities can be attributed to a variety of reasons. First, the majority of personnel was recruited from Kinshasa, the capital city of the DRC, and then transferred to the area. Second, local people had inadequate technical skills for the project in terms of construction, maintenance, and day-to-day functioning. Thus, they cannot be easily employed. Thirdly, as in other rural areas, young people with skills had left the area for the cities in search of better socio-economic opportunities.

### **Local Activism and Transnational Solidarity**

The stakeholders' policy of seeking means to maximise the benefit without taking into consideration social issues, has been the driving force behind the mobilisation of civil society organisations around the IHP. In fact, from the DRC government's officials to the international financial institutions and development agencies (the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, ESKOM, the *Société Nationale d'Electricité*, the project Western Corridor, and others) never mentioned the share of the dam-affected communities or Congolese people at large, at least up to now, let alone the issues of environmental sustainability or sustainable development. In support of this claim, Mr. di Panzu (2006), the *SNEL* Chief Executive Officer told the audience at the International Round Table on Inga III held in Johannesburg in 2006 of potential foreign investors;

... The Inga Falls site is empty. There is no a single human being in the area since we began the project in 1963. They were all killed by diseases including black flies [thus, there are neither social nor environmental problems...].

It is a fact that struggles for basic human rights have been and continue to be, surprisingly, the main feature of the interactions between the DRC government and the Congolese people from the time of colonialism to the current regime. The Congolese did rise and continue to do so in order to challenge the *status quo*, making their claims heard, and fighting for citizenship and rights because

...right is therefore not a standard granted as a charity from above, but as a standard-bearer around which people rally for struggle from below... right is a means of struggles” (Shivji: 1989: 3; cited in Mander, 2005: 233).

However, the revival of struggles around the IHP and internationalisation is a product of the challenges and opportunities that neo-liberal globalisation offers to impoverished countries such as the DRC. In fact, whereas neo-liberal globalisation brings different people together through Information Technology, it has negative impacts on the poor and “affect how people organise, how they interpret the sources of their problems, and how they frame prospect for change” (Smith, J. and Johnson, 2002). In fact, as civil society organisations are not a conducive environment for activism, they build transnational networks and solidarity with civil society organisations of the north and other African countries in order to lobby their own governments and the international financial institutions in favour of the dam-affected communities. These networks are critical because there was a level of activism fatigue after decades of unsuccessful attempts in order to bring change. Solidarity, in the context of this study,

... is not fighting other’s people battles. It is about establishing cooperation between constituencies on the basis of mutual self-respect and concerns about injustice suffered by each other. It is about taking sides in the face of injustice or the processes that reproduce injustice. It is not built on sympathy or charity or the portrayal of others as objects of pity... It is about taking actions within one’s own terrain that will enhance the capacity of others to succeed in their fight against injustice (Manji, 1998; cited in Mander, 2005: 233).

Transnational solidarity, particularly with civil society organisations from the north, has been successful in four important areas. Firstly, the transnational solidarity has

been successful in articulating the concerns and expectations of the dam-affected communities in international meetings. Secondly, transnational solidarity does fundraising in order to support both the dam-affected communities and Congolese civil society organisations attending conferences and workshops outside the DRC. Thirdly, this solidarity is responsible for fundraising to cover administrative costs of some civil society organisations involved in the struggle for social and environmental justice around the Inga Hydropower Project. Fourthly, transnational solidarity has been successful in raising awareness of the legacies of the Inga I and Inga II plants, and the direct negative impacts of megadam projects on people through destruction of their livelihoods, social capital, and historical heritage. Transnational solidarity has also been successful in reminding the international community of the indirect harmful effects of dams on the poor and on women through repayment of illegitimate debts which compete with poverty alleviation programmes and reconstruction of war torn countries like the DRC. In fact, the money that the DRC is repaying on illegitimate debts should be used in different useful programmes.

## **Tyranny of Transnational Solidarity**

... like bats, and one can see in them both birds and mice, so it is possible to see two quite different animals, and both limits and potentials, in civil society [organisations] (Lumsden, and Lotus, 2003).

The transnational civil society organisations present both challenges and opportunities to the Congolese people. On the one hand, these institutions generally promote and advocate for social and environmental justice, and public accountability and participation around mega projects including the IHP. This contribution is well appreciated by Congolese civil society organisations given that from within the DRC, there is no room for manoeuvre for community development. However, it is also important to reveal the disturbing attitudes of some transnational civil society organisations which are so autocratic in their decision making process that they undermine the democratic principles that they claim to promote and perpetuate the agendas of the countries they represent. To be more to the point, some civil society organisations involved in water and dam related issues based in South Africa do not give space to civil society organisations from other SADC countries including the DRC to actively contribute to the debates, thus

empowering themselves to improve their activities on the ground. This is based on the assumption that leadership from other countries need to learn from those based in South Africa because of the South African political miracle of peacefully moving the country from a racially divided one under the apartheid system to an inclusive country in which each citizen is equally valued and has a critical role to play for the well-being of all. In addition, South African civil society organisations have easy access to funding opportunities from within and abroad compared to several organisations from other SADC countries. What is frequently happening is that in the several meetings organised by or funded through some African civil society organisations that I had the privilege to attend, many SADC civil society organisations have never been involved in setting the agenda or dates, selecting participants, or planning for further conferences which deal with individual countries' problems. Many SADC civil society organisations are expected to listen and follow what has been presented and decided by South African civil society organisations during or for further meetings. In the same vein, a meeting planned and funded by civil society organisations from a SADC country was cancelled in 2006 by the delegation from South Africa because it was not informed prior to the planning.

Some South African civil society organisations would instruct representatives from other SADC countries what to say and how to say it, what to do and how to do it in different meetings, for fear of upsetting some funders including some South African Departments. Some further examples, just to list a few, during the International Round Table on the Grand Inga in Gaborone Botswana, the delegates from other SADC countries were requested not to attend the last session because it was believed by the South African delegation to be less important. Other delegates, and Congolese people in particular, refused to stay in their hotel, arguing that they came for the conference and therefore they must attend all sessions. This opposition did not please the delegation from South Africa which was also invited to the conference organised and funded by the World Energy Council. The South African delegation has not invited Congolese civil society organisations and several other delegates from other SADC countries to other conferences, including the one in Brazzaville, despite the fact that Brazzaville and Kinshasa are the closest capital cities in the world.

This tendency of maximising power in a non-structured grouping that some South African civil society organisations demonstrate is not new in the study of social movements. In fact, Freeman's (1970) "Tyranny of structurelessness" illustrated that:

there is no such thing as a 'structureless' group. Any group of people of whatever nature coming together for any length of time, for any purpose, will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible, it may vary over time, and it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources among the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities and intentions of the people involved.

As a result of this, the lack of hierarchical structure, which is the main feature of social movements, often witnesses that a small faction of activists exercise disproportionate power.

I do not deny that civil society organisations are different, as are their leaderships, owing to different abilities and limitations given by nature, the individual countries of origin for different reasons including the degree of democratisation process, the levels of civic literacy and economic development, and respect of human rights by the governments. Yet, this process is detrimental for the activists from war torn countries and countries which have been and continue to exist under different forms of dictatorial regimes including the DRC, Angola, and the like because the delay of democratisation and development in these countries will consequently undermine the democratisation process and development of Africa as a whole.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored the role of national and international politics in the IHP from its inception to present. The project is mainly motivated by political considerations which neglect social and economic sustainability. As a result of political interference in the developmental projects, the poor are getting poorer through the destruction of their livelihoods, the absence of compensation and consultation, structural exclusion from accessing electricity, diseases caused or worsened by the dam reservoir, poor political leadership, and repayment of illegitimate debts. The rich are getting richer by means of corruption, bribes, manipulation of public funds, traffic of influence, nepotism, favouritism, and mismanagement of the revenues from selling electricity abroad.

The lack of collaboration between some Congolese civil society organisations have forced them to build international networks in order to create some space in which they can voice their concerns and the expectations of the dam-affected communities in terms of public good governance and fair repartition of resources between rural areas and cities, rich and poor, the DRC and the international market. In this quest for social justice, Congolese civil society organisations face another challenge of hegemony of some transnational networks, which undermines their capacity building and the exchanging of knowledge on the assumption that they do not know much and therefore have less to contribute.

It is important that the DRC have a visionary civil society leadership capable of securing financial resources and expertise from abroad including South Africa and, at the same time, meeting the expectations of ordinary Congolese people for whom the collapse of the state forces them to solely rely on the voluntary sector in order to survive and hope for a better future. Otherwise, Congolese civil society leaderships will be moving from one conference to another without having substantial impact on the ground.

Some ways forward consist of:

- Understanding that development within the SADC context is every country member's concern, some contributing more than others, but all facing the same direction. The economic growth of South Africa and its relative respect of human rights compared to other African countries, and subsequent migration flows to South Africa indicate that, like in African families, a member who emerges without pulling others out of poverty is likely to bear the weight of others;
- Empowering and strengthening the weakest links – weak civil society organisations due to several reasons – in our transnational solidarity against accumulation by dispossession, commodification of basic human rights, and impoverishment of the majority to the benefit of ethnic bourgeoisies; and
- Building people's solidarity which challenges the artificial boundaries between SADC members and so creating a peaceful environment which is badly needed for the development of the region and Africa at large.

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