Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., doi:10.5194/hess-2016-318, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.
Published: 29 August 2016
© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

Hydrology and Earth System Sciences
Open Access
Discussions

Temporal and spatial changes of rainfall and streamflow in the Upper Tekeze–Atbara River Basin, Ethiopia

Tesfay Gebretsadkan Gebremicael[1, 2, 3], Yasir Abbas Mohamed[1, 2, 4], Pieter van der Zaag[1, 2], Eyasu Yazew Hagos[5]

[1]UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, P.O. Box 3015, 2601 DA Delft, The Netherlands
[2]Delft University of Technology, P.O. Box 5048, 2600 GA Delft, The Netherlands
[3]Tigray Agricultural Research Institute, P.O. Box 492, Mekelle, Ethiopia
[4]Hydraulic Research Center, P.O. Box 318, Wad Medani, Sudan
[5]Mekelle University, P.O. Box 231, Mekelle, Ethiopia

Correspondence to: T.G. Gebremicael (t.gebremicael@unesco-ihe.org/dutg2006@gmail.com)

Abstract. The Upper Tekeze–Atbara river basin–part of the Nile basin, is characterized by high temporal and spatial variability of rainfall and streamflow. In spite of its importance for sustainable water use and food security, the changing patterns of streamflow and its association with climate change is not well understood in the basin. This study aims at improving the understanding of the linkages between rainfall and streamflow trends and identifying the drivers of streamflow variabilities in the basin. Trend and change point detections of rainfall and streamflow were analysed using Mann-Kendall and Pettitt tests, respectively, using data records for 21 rainfall and 9 streamflow stations. The nature of changes and linkages between rainfall and streamflow were carefully examined for monthly, seasonal, annual flows as well as Indicators of Hydrological Alterations (IHA).
The trend and change point analyses found that 20 of the tested 21 rainfall stations did not show statistically significant changes. In contrast, trend analyses on the streamflow showed a significant increasing/decreasing patterns. A decreasing trend in the dry (October to February), short (March to May), main rainy seasons (June to September) and annual totals is dominant in 6 out of the 9 stations. Only one out of nine gauging stations experienced increasing flow significantly in the dry and short rainy seasons. This increasing trend is attributed to the construction of Tekeze hydropower dam above the station in 2009. Overall, streamflow trends and change point timings were found to be inconsistent among the stations. Changes in streamflow without significant change in rainfall suggests other factors than rainfall to drive the change. Weak linkages between rainfall and streamflow trends indicate that the observed changes in streamflow regimes could be due to changes in catchment characteristics of the basin. Further studies are needed to verify and quantify the hydrological changes shown in statistical tests by identifying the physical mechanisms behind those changes. The findings from this study are useful as a pre-requisite for studying the effects of catchment management dynamics on the hydrological variabilities in the basin.

Keywords: Streamflow variability, Trend analyses, Tekeze River Basin, Statistical test

1 Introduction

Recent changes in climatic conditions combined with other anthropogenic factors have increased the concern of the international community on water resources management in basins (Jones et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2008). Understanding climate change and its impact on hydrological variability is important for water management , and thus has received attention from researchers in different parts of the world (e.g. Kim et al., 2008; Ma et al., 2008; Pano et al., 2010; Tekleab et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2013; Zhan et al., 2014; Zhao et al., 2015). These studies investigate how climate change reflected in changing rainfall patterns affects the hydrological regimes of river basins.

Identifying the trends and linkages between rainfall and streamflow is fundamental to understand the influence of climate change on the hydrological variability of a basin. Many studies (e.g., IPCC, 2013; Shi et al., 2013; Tekleab et al., 2013; Tesemma et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2015) have shown that rainfall is the primary atmospheric factor that directly affects the streamflow patterns. The impact of climate change on hydrology varies from place to place. For example, Ma et al. (2008) for arid region of northwest China, Zhang et al. (2011) for China, Zhao et al. (2015) for Wei river basin of China, Love et al. (2010) for the Limpopo river of Southern Africa and Abeysingha et al. (2015) for the Gomti river basin in north India, found that a decreasing trend of rainfall resulted a significant reduction in the streamflow. In contrast, Masih et al. (2011) in Zagros mountains of Iran, Wilk and Hughes (2002) in South India and Abdul Aziz and Burn (2006) in the Mavkenzie river basin of Canada, reported that an increasing trend of rainfall have significantly increased river flows. There are also a number of studies (e.g., Tekleab et al., 2013; Gebremicael et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015; Hannaford, 2015; Saraiva et al., 2015) who found that changes in rainfall are not sufficient to explain the trends in the streamflow.

In Ethiopia, few studies analysed the trend of hydro-climatic variables. Conway and Hulme (1993) reported declining annual rainfall over the Blue Nile and Atbara basins resulting in a reduction of river flows between 1945 and 1984. In contrast, recent investigations by Tesemma et al. (2010), Tekleab et al. (2013) and Gebremicael et al. (2013) agreed that rainfall over the Upper Blue Nile basin did not show a statistically significant trend for the last 40 years (1964-2005). Despite that the pattern of rainfall remained constant, hydrological flows in the basin showed a heterogeneous trend. Rainy (June to September) and dry (October to February) season flows at the Upper Blue Nile basin outlet (EI Diem) have significantly increased and decreased, respectively, while the annual flow did not show statistically significant trend. This implies that trends observed in the river flows may not be attributed to climate change but rather to changes in catchment characteristics. The lack of consensus in the literature may also show that there is still considerable uncertainties about the impact of climate change on the hydrological regimes of the region. The length of the statistical record has a direct implication on the results of the trend analyses and some of the observed discrepancies could be because of applying different

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

periods of time series data. For example, Dixon et al. (2006) investigated the impact of record length on the trend pattern of stream flow in Wales and central England and their results indicated that trend over 50 and 60 years showed statistically significant increasing, while for a medium record length (30–40) remained constant. Record length less than 25 years showed statistically significant increasing trend. This shows that trend analyses is sensitive to time domain and careful attention should be given during analyses.

With regard to the Tekeze-Atbara river basin, no comprehensive study of the hydro-climatic trends exist. Seleshi and Zanke (2004) attempted to investigate the pattern of rainfall over the upper part of Tekeze River basin by considering only one climatic station. Their output demonstrated that rainfall remained constant for the past 40 years (1962–2002). Despite the importance of streamflow for the sustainable use of water resource and ensuring food security in the semi-arid regions of the country, long-term trends and change point of flow regimes and the association with climate change are not yet well understood. Therefore, it is important to understand the connections between rainfall and streamflow trends of the basin and establish whether hydrological variability is driven by changes in climate or by changes in catchment characteristics or both. This paper is intended to (i) investigate the spatiotemporal variability of rainfall and streamflow in the headwaters of Tekeze basin, (ii) identify any abrupt changes if significant trends exists, and (iii) explore the impact of climate change reflected in change in rainfall patterns on the hydrological variability of the basin.

2 Study area descriptions

The study area is the upper part of Tekeze River basin, located in Northern Ethiopia between longitude 37.5° – 39.8° E and latitude 11.5° – 14.3° N (Fig .1). The Tekeze river originates in the southern part of the basin near RasDeshen Mountains and flows in the northern direction and then turns towards west flowing into north-eastern Sudan, where the river joins Atbara River (Zenebe, 2009; Belete, 2007). This basin is one of the major tributaries of the Nile River which drains from an area of 45,694 km^2 at the Embamadre gauging station (Fig. 1). The mean annual flow at this point is 5.4 10^9 m^3 yr^{-1}, which is about 66 % of the total annual flow. The topography of the basin is characterized by ragged topography consisting of mountains, highlands and terrains of gentle slopes. Elevation of the basin varies from 834 m.a.s.l at the basin outlet in Embamadre to more than 4528 m.a.s.l in the Ras Dashen mountains.

The general climate of the basin is semi-arid in the east and north and partly himud climate in the south, where rainfall is ranging from below 400 mm yr^{-1} in the east to more than 1200 mm yr^{-1} in the south (Belete, 2007; Zenebe, 2009). More than 70 % of the total annual rainfall falls in two months (July and August). The variations of rainfall over the basin are mainly associated with the seasonal migration of the inter-tropical convergence zone (ITCZ) and complex topography (Nyssen et al., 2005). The river flow pattern follows that of rainfall. Maximum stream flow occurs in August, while it ceases completely during the dry season from October to February.

Dominant land use in the basin includes cultivable land (>70.5%), open grass land, sparsely grown woodland, bushes and shrubs and exposed rocks (Tefera, 2003). This basin is characterized by severe land degradation through deforestation, over grazing and cultivation on the rugged topography. However, it is also known for its more recent experiences with soil and water conservation (SWC) activities (Alemayouh et al., 2009; Nyssen et al., 2010). Physical SWC structures (Alemayouh et al., 2009; Negusse et al., 2013) and biological SWC measures through plantation and exclosures (Descheemaeker et al., 2006, 2008; Belay et al., 2014) have been practiced in the semi-arid parts of the basin. In addition, one large hydropower dam inaugurated in 2009 is found approximately 83 km upstream of the outlet (Fig. 1) which may also alters the flow regimes in the downstream.

3 Data and Methods

Temporal and spatial datasets of rainfall and streamflow are required for the trend and change point analyses. These statistical analysis directly depends on the quality and length of the time series data. Therefore, more efforts were given to verify the accuracy of the rainfall and streamflow data. Scrutinizing of these time series data are summarized in section 3.1 and 3.2.

3.1 Rainfall data

For this study, daily rainfall data since 1953 were used from 21 stations located within and surrounding the basin (Fig. 1 and Table 1). These data were provided by the Ethiopian National Meteorological service Agency. After scrutiny of all stations, only 21 out of more than 75 stations in the basin were considered for further analyses. Despite that the length of the records varied from station to station, all gauging stations with at least 30 years of continuous and relatively good quality of observed data were taken into account. The 30 years record period is a reasonable length for applying statistical trend analyses of rainfall (Love et al., 2010; Longobardi and Villani, 2009). The location and general information of all rainfall stations are shown in Fig. 1 and Table 1.

Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., doi:10.5194/hess-2016-318, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.
Published: 29 August 2016
© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

3.1.1 Rainfall data analyses and validation

Visual inspection, linear and multiple regression analyses between neighbouring stations and other global datasets, including New_LocClime software package (Grieser et al., 2010), CHIRPS (Funk et al., 2014) and TRMM (Simpson et al., 1988), were applied for data analyses and validation, detecting outliers, filling missing values and reliability checking for all gauging stations. The rainfall datasets were found to be reliable to be used for statistical analysis.

The coefficient of variation in annual rainfall of the basin ranges from 18 % in the southern to 33 % in the eastern and northern parts of the basin. As presented in Table 1, all but two stations have a coefficient of variation below 30 % which is acceptable limit for data validation (Medvigy and Beauliew, 2011; Sushant et al., 2015). To ensure data continuity and integrity, missing rainfall data of less than 1 year were estimated from global and neighbouring stations and data gaps larger than 1 year were excluded from the analyses. Based on these data screening and analyses methods, rainfall data with missing values less than 10 % have been used in the analyses.

Satellite data including Climate Hazards Group Infrared Precipitations (CHIRPS) and Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission's (TRMM) were used to validate and filling the missing values. Among many rainfall estimates (RFE) in the area, e.g., (RFE, CMORPH, ERA40, CHIRPS, TRMM), the last two were used to validate and fill in missing data. Both satellite data sources have a relatively high resolution (TRMM 0.25° and CHRPS 0.05°), were commonly used in Africa (Shukala et al., 2014; Katsanos et al., 2015). Detailed descriptions of these rainfall products are documented in many publications (e.g. Dinku et al., 2007; Funk et al., 2014; Katsanos et al., 2015; Simpson et al., 1988). Before using them for validation and reliability checking, the rainfall products were first compared directly with observed rainfall of selected stations with good quality data. As the observed rainfall data in the region are sparse and unevenly distributed, the point data were not interpolated into gridded time series. Instead, area averaged time series of satellite rainfall products around each gauging station (~ 25 km radius) were taken for the comparison. A common time period (1998-2015) of the satellite (y) and ground rainfall (x) data were considered for the comparison.

The performance of the satellite products in estimating the amount of rainfall around the gauging stations were evaluated using statistical measures shown in Table 2. Their full descriptions can be found in Toté et al. (2015), Thiemig et al. (2012), Derin and Yilmaz (2014).

Both CHIRPS and TRMM (3B42v7) satellite products were evaluated against monthly rainfall values from seven observed stations. The performance results show that CHIRPS outperformed TRMM on the majority of stations (Fig. 2). CHIRPS rainfall data showed a good correlation with observed rainfall in the stations. Accordingly, the CHIRPS rainfall data were used for reliability checking and filling missing values of all stations before trend analyses. It has been reported that this product has a better performance in Africa (Funk et al., 2014; Toté et al., 2015). Hessel (2015) compared 10 satellite rainfall products over the Nile basin and CHIRPS products were best performed and recommended for the basin. The likely reason for its better performance could be because of its availability at high resolution of 0.05 degrees.

3.2 Streamflow data

Stream flow data from all gauging stations in the basin were obtained from the Ethiopian Ministry of Water Resources and Energy. Although the recording of flow data over the basin started in the late 1960s, it was discontinued for most of the gauging stations during the civil war in the 1980s. To this effect, only nine out of the total 39 stations have an extended period of more than 20 years data and were these used in the analyses. A longer period of historical data increases the reliability of results from trend analyses, while shorter period enhances spatial coverage of streamflow. A length of more than 20 years data is desirable for trend analyses of streamflow (Abdul Aziz and Burn, 2006; Saraiva et al., 2015; Abeysingha et al., 2015). The sensitivity results to length of flow record has been investigated in section 1. The location and general information of all flow stations used are summarized in Fig. 1 and Table 3. The average annual flows of each station indicate that hydrological responses are spatially uneven over the basin. For example, Illala and Werie have higher streamflow per unit area as compared to Genfel and Geba. Approximately, the same volume of water (14 %) is contributed to Geba from different drainage areas of Genfel (30 %) and Illala (13.9 %). Given the drainage area of Geba (10 %) and Werie (3.9 %), more water is discharged from Werie (5 %) than from Geba 2 (6 %) to the Emabamadre station which explicitly point out to a high variability in hydrological response to catchment characteristics.

As hydro-meteorological data in the basin, if not in all basins in Ethiopia, is scanty and with many gaps, it is critical to carefully screen and check their quality before using them for analyses. Hence, the raw data were visually inspected and screened for mistyped and outliers. Each station was carefully checked its data consistency in comparing to the nearby, upstream and downstream stations. Identified unreliable data were fixed after comparing its upper and lower boundary

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

limits. Furthermore, heterogeneity of the time series data was also detected using the double mass curve and residual mass plot methods. The monthly hydrological flow data were aggregated from the daily data and the seasonal and annual data was calculated from the monthly data. Finally, Missing data for more than two years were excluded in the analysis. During the peak rainy season, where more than 80 % of the river flow occurs, missing data for more than two weeks were excluded in the analysis.

3.3 Trend analyses method

To identify the trend of rainfall and streamflow, a non-parametric Man-Kendall (Kendall, 1975) statistical test is applied. The Man–Kendall test (MK), is a rank based method that has been widely used to detect the trend of hydro-climatic time series data in different parts of the world (e.g Abdul Aziz and Burn, 2006; Gebremicael et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2015; Návar, 2015; Tekleab et al., 2013; Mohamed & Savenije, 2014; Wang et al., 2015). The procedure of MK testing approach starts by calculating the MK statistic s using Eq. (1) (Yue et al., 2002).

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{n=1} \sum_{j=i+1}^{n} \mathrm{sgn}(x_j - \mathrm{x}_i), \quad \text{where } \mathrm{sgn}(\theta) = \begin{cases} +1 \\ 0 \\ -1 \end{cases} \quad \text{if} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \theta > 0 \\ \theta = 0 \\ \theta < 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad (1)$$

Where xj and xk are the data values in time j and k and j>k, respectively, and n is the length of data set. The normalized test statistics Z of MK test and the variance VAR(S) were calculated as shown in Eq. (2) and Eq. (3).

$$\mathrm{Z} = \begin{cases} \frac{\mathrm{S}-1}{\sqrt{\mathrm{V(S)}}} \\ 0 \\ \frac{\mathrm{S}+1}{\sqrt{\mathrm{V(S)}}} \end{cases} \quad \text{if} \quad \begin{bmatrix} S > 0 \\ S = 0 \\ S < 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad (2)$$

$$V(S) = \frac{1}{18}[n(n-1)(2n+5)] \qquad (3)$$

Where s and v(S) are the Kendall's statistics and Variance, respectively. The MK test calculates Kendall's statistics s, which is the sum of the difference between data points and a measure of associations between two samples (Kendall's tau). The MK test, accepts the null hypothesis if -Z ≤ Zcr ≤ Z, where Zcr is critical value of the normalized statistics Z at 5 % confidence level (1.96). Positive and negative values of those parameters (z, s, and tau) indicate an 'upward trend' and 'downward trend', respectively. In order to evaluate the trend results, the Z value combined with the computed two-tailed probability (P) were compared with the user defined confidence level (5 %) of standard normal distribution curve. The MK test is commonly used and suitable to identify trends in water resources as it is not affected by the distribution, outliers and missing values of time series data (Yue et al., 2002, 2003; Zhang et al, 2008, 2011).

The existence of serial correlation in the time series data may affect trend detection in the non-parametric trend test methods (Masih et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2011). The Trend-Free Pre-Whitening (TFPW) method (Yue et al., 2003) was employed to avoid serial correlations in the data. This method is found to be the most powerful tool to remove a serial correlation time series if it exists (Yue et al., 2003; Burn et al., 2004; Tekleab et al., 2010; Mohamed & Savenije, 2014). The data series was pre-whitened using the formula shown in Eq. (4).

$$Y_1 = Y_t - r1.Y_{t-1} \quad (4)$$

Where r_1 is the estimated serial correlation coefficient, Y_t is trended series for time interval t, and Y_1 is data series without auto-regressive, and Y_{t-1} is the original time series value. Detailed descriptions of TFPW can be seen in literatures, e.g., (Yue et al., 2003; Burn et al., 2004; Tekleab et al., 2010, Gao et al., 2011). Finally, the MK test was applied to the trend free pre-whitened data series for analysing the gradual change in the rainfall and stream flows.

3.4 Change point detection method

To estimate the occurrence of an abrupt change, a non-parametric Pettitt test (Pettitt, 1979) was applied to the trend-free pre-whitened data series. Pettitt test is a rank-based and distribution-free test for identifying if there is a significant change between cumulative functions before and after a time instant. Pettitt test considers a sequence of random variables $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_T$ that can have a change point at τ if X_t for t, …, τ have common distribution function $f_1(x)$ and Xt for t= τ+1, …, T have a common distribution function $f_2(x)$, and $f_1(x) \neq f_2(x)$. The test statistics K_T= Max$|U_t, T|$, $1 \leq \tau < T$ and associated probability (P) used to test were computed using equations found in Gao et al. (2011). The test was evaluated against a user-defined significance level (5 %) and P values less than 5% were considered as a statistically significant change in the data series. This technique has been widely used to detect time change points in the hydro-climatic data (e.g., Ma et al., 2008; Love et al., 2010; Gao et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2011; Gebremicael et al., 2013; Tekleab et al., 2013).

3.5 Hydrological alteration indicators

Temporal and spatial streamflow variability can also be characterized and quantified using hydrologic alteration indicators. Indicators of Hydrologic Alteration (IHA) software developed

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

by the US Nature Conservancy (Mathews and Richter, 2007) were applied to assess the degree of hydrological alteration. Twenty out of the 33 IHA parameters were selected for this study. The selected parameters are magnitude and duration of annual extreme water conditions (e.g. 1–day, 7–day minimum and maximum flows), rate and frequency of water condition changes (e.g. rising rate and falling rate) and magnitude of monthly water conditions (e.g. monthly flows). Such IHA parameters are common in characterizing of hydrological regimes influenced by climate and anthropogenic factors (Tayler et al., 2003; Mathews and Richter, 2007; Masih et al., 2011; Saraiva et al., 2015). The consistency of those parameters were analysed and compared with the user-defined P values (5 %).

4 Results and discussion

According to NMSA (1996), major seasons in the study area are the rainy (June-September), dry (October-February) and short rainy seasons (March-May). Before detecting trends in precipitation and hydrological flows, serial correlation existence in all datasets were tested at monthly, seasonal and annual scales. Accordingly, 9.1 % – 18 % of the monthly, seasonal and annual data of the rainfall stations were found to have a statistically significant auto–correlation at 95% confidence level. This implies there is a possibilities of trends up to 18% of the stations when actually there is no trend. Similarly, 3.2 % – 6 % of the monthly and seasonal flows showed statistically significant auto-correlation. It is unclear that the monthly and seasonal fluxes showed stronger autocorrelation than annual. The probable reason could be because of storage properties in the catchments, non-normal data and missing values (Hirsch and Slake, 1984; Abeysingha et al., 2015). Furthermore, continuous constant observations in the dry months, where the river flow is very small may have increased the degree of temporal dependency among observations. To avoid such spurious trend detection, serial correlation problems in all time periods were eliminated using Trend–Free Pre–Whitening techniques before trend analyses.

4.1 Temporal and spatial variability of rainfall

The presence of monotonic increasing/decreasing trends in monthly, seasonal and annual rainfall of 21 gauging stations were tested using the MK test. The results for seasonal and annual rainfall are summarized in Table 4. Positive and negative values of Z statistics are showing increasing and decreasing trends, respectively. Bolded Z statistics illustrates statistically significant trends of rainfall.

Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., doi:10.5194/hess-2016-318, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.
Published: 29 August 2016
© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

Results of the trend were used to identify if the time series of annual and seasonal rainfall had a statistically significant trend in the last 30–60 years (Table 4). The results of the rainfall analyses shows no trends. Except for two stations (annual), and one station (rainy season), there is no significant in the rainfall trends in the Upper Tekeze basin. However, although statistically not significant, statistical indices of the test revealed a tendency of decreasing rainfall in the main rainy season and annuals in the eastern and northern part while an increasing tendency in the southern and western parts of the basin. With regard to monthly rainfall, despite there is some temporal and spatial variability of monthly rainfall, no dominant trends are found for the majority of the months (results not provided here).

The Pettitt test was used to identify if there is a breakpoint in the data series. Similar to the MK test, the majority of rainfall stations did not show statistically significant change point at 5 % significance level, results are not shown here. For example, change point for annual and seasonal rainfall of some stations can be seen in Fig. 3. Fig. 3a and 3c illustrate that annual rainfall in Mekelle (AP) and Adigrat stations do not show an upward or downward shift in the given time domain. An increasing and decreasing change point of annual and short rainy season (March–May) rainfall in Axum and AbiAdi stations are shown in Fig. 3b and 3d, respectively. In general, most of the rainfall stations across the basin did not experiences a statistically significant trend at 5 % significance level. The result also reveal that even though there is no dominant trend, monthly rainfall is more variable than seasonal and annual rainfall over the basin. The possible reason could be amount of rainfall in a given month is shifted to the next or previous month and the station might be receiving the same amount of seasonal rainfall but varying in distribution among the months. Another possible reason could be topographically induced climate. For example, Bizuneh (2013) noticed that monthly rainfall variability in Siluh catchment of Geba basin is dependent on altitude. Furthermore, observed monthly rainfall variability might be due to large-scale oscillation variability rather than long–term climate variability in the basin.

The results of this study are consistent with Seleshi and Zanke (2004) who found no significant trends of rainfall at Mekelle station. Results from neighbouring catchments of similar climate characteristics (e.g., Tekleab et al., 2013; Gebremicael et al., 2013) have also shown that the pattern of rainfall remained constant for the last 40 years which is in agreement with our finding.

Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., doi:10.5194/hess-2016-318, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.
Published: 29 August 2016
© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

4.2 Streamflow variability

4.2.1 Long term trends of streamflow

Streamflow of nine gaging stations (Table 3) was analysed for long term trend detection using MK and Pettitt test. Table 5 summarizes the results from the MK test and positive and negative values of Z statistics associated with the computed probability (P–value) shows an increasing or decreasing trends. Statistically significant trends are shown in bold.

Annual flow patterns exhibited a declining trend in the majority of stations although this time is more pronounced in the eastern part of the basin (Table 5). The change is found to be statistically significant at Siluh, Genfel, Geba stations. Interestingly, although there is a dominant decreasing pattern in the majority of the tributaries, the annual flow at Embamadre station did not significantly changed. Seasonal streamflow of the stations were also analysed to further scrutinize temporal and spatial variability.

The analyses found that a significant decreasing of dry season flow has occurred in most stations (Table 5). During the short rainy season, a decreasing trend has occurred in five stations, some of these trends being statistically significant. Nevertheless, in the dry and short rainy seasons flow has significantly increased only at the basin outlet (Embamadre). Streamflow showed a significant increasing trend at Embamadre and a non-significant increasing trend at Kulmesk during the main rainy season. In contrast, a gradual decreasing pattern of flow was recorded in the remaining gauging stations with this change being significant in four stations (Table 5).

Majority of the gauging stations did not show a consistent trend in monthly streamflow. For example, discharge in Siluh and Genfel stations is characterized by a decreasing trend in most months. A significant decreasing trend is found in April and May flows of Agulae and Illala watersheds while the remaining months observed a decreasing trend that was not statistically significant (Table 5). The combination of Siluh, Genfel and Agulae tributaries at Geba station near Mekelle showed a decreasing trend in all months. Monthly flow patterns of the Upper Tekeze River Basin, the sum of all gauged (Table 4) and ungagged tributaries at Embamadre station, revealed a significantly increasing trend in April and May while all other months remained unchanged.

The Pettitt test was also applied to identify an abrupt change of streamflow in the catchments. The change points of annual and seasonal flow for selected stations are shown in Fig. 4. For the annual flow, stations did not show consistent shifts across all stations. For example, annual

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

flows in Siluh and Geba catchments shifted downward after 1992 and 2002, respectively, while no significant abrupt change was observed in Genfel and Tekeze at Embamadre despite strong monthly and seasonal variability (Fig. 4). Change points of seasonal flow for the same stations confirmed an abrupt change in the downward and upward directions (Fig. 4). Dry and short rainy season flows in all stations except at the basin outlet showed a significant downward shifts since the early 2000s. Conversely, abrupt increase of streamflow has occurred at the basin outlet for the same seasons. The Pettitt test has also shown that hydrological flows during the rainy season remained constant in most stations (Fig. 4).

In summary, most stations exhibited a statistically significant change during the short rainy (5 stations) and dry seasons (6 stations). Similarly, trends in the main rainy season and annual flow showed a significant change in 3 to 4 of the stations. Several stations exhibited change points of monthly streamflow, results not shown here. For example, a change points of monthly (Jan, April, May and August) streamflow is observed in Siluh catchment. A downward shift of monthly streamflow was occurred since 1996. The monthly stream flow of Genfel and Geba catchments has significantly declined starting from 2003 and 2004, respectively. In contrast, an upward shift of monthly streamflow was observed at Emabamadre for January, April and May which became significant after 2009.

Interestingly, some of the trends in the upper catchments counterbalance each other when combined in the downstream stations. For example, negative trends during the short rainy season in Siluh, Genfel, and Agulae cancelled out when combined at Geba near Mekelle. A remarkable result was that, although a majority stations in the upper catchments showed a declining pattern of streamflow, the entire basin flows at the outlet did not show a negative trend, in some cases, the base flow significantly increased after 2009. Significant increasing trend during the dry and short rainy season at this station is most likely due to the construction (2009) of Tekeze hydropower dam located 83 km upstream of the station. Change in catchment response from ungagged catchments of the basin might also have contributed to increase the flow at this station.

The above results are in agreement with previous local studies (e.g. Abraha, 2014; Bizuneh, 2013; Zenebe, 2009) who found strong variability of stream flows in different sub-catchments of the basin. Compared to the neighbouring basin (Upper Blue Nile) studies by Gebremicael et al. (2013) in four stations and Tessema et al. (2010) in three stations who found a significant increasing trend of streamflow in short rainy, main rainy, annual flows and a decreasing trend in the dry season flow, the Tekeze basin, particularly in the semi-arid parts of the basin experienced a significant decreasing trend and high variability of streamflow. This variability is expected as land degradation in Tekeze basin is more pronounced than other basins in the country (Awulachew et al., 2007; Gebrehiwot et al., 2011; Gebreyohannes et al., 2013; Yazew, 2005; Zenebe, 2009).

4.2.2 Hydrological Alteration Indicators

Although, the previous analysis showed the long term trends of rainfall and stream flow in the Upper Tekeze basin, it could not address the short dynamics of the hydrology within the catchment, and whether it can explain some of the results given above. The magnitude and duration of annual extreme conditions were also analysed using six IHA (1–day, 3–day and 7–day annual minima and maxima). Results from these extreme conditions indicate a dominant significant decreasing trend in both minimum and maximum daily flows (Table 6). On the other hand, a significant increasing trend of the minimum flow is detected at Embamadre station.

The trends in the rate and frequency of changes in water conditions were also explored using rise and fall rate parameters. Accordingly, the rising rate in daily flow of all stations remained constant while the daily falling rate has significantly increased in the tributaries and decreased in the basin outlet. It can be seen that the trend of minimum flows described by 1–day, 3–day and 7–day, is consistent with the trend of monthly and seasonal flows. Moreover, the IHA change point analyses has also shown shifts in minimum and maximum flows during the dry and wet seasons of the catchments. The extreme 1–day and 7–day minimum and maximum flows significantly shifted downward at the Siluh and Geba catchments. In the Tekeze at Embamadre station, the 1–day and 7–day minimum flows significantly increased around 2003, but 1–day and 7–day maximum flows remained unchanged. Illala catchment experienced a decrease of the 1–day minimum and an increase of the 1–day maximum annual flows with change points at around 2000 and 1995, respectively. Extreme high flows characterized by the 1–day and 7–day annual and maximum flows did not significantly change at the basin outlet which may be also because of the dam above the station (see sect. 4.2.1)

4.2.3 Drivers for streamflow variabilities

Climatic conditions, and the particular rainfall, as well as human activities in a catchment are the most important factors influencing hydrological variability of streams. In this study, temporal and spatial analyses of rainfall from both MK and Pettitt tests showed that rainfall over the basin did not significantly change during the period of analyses. Streamflow, in contrast did exhibit a strong temporal and spatial variability in the basin. This suggests that the

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

change in hydrological flow is not significantly influenced by rainfall. The timing of observed trends in streamflow is not uniform, however, this may indicate that the impact of human interference and physiographic characteristics differs from sub-catchment to sub-catchment. Trend analyses is sensitive to the time domain as different results can be obtained for different time periods. In this study, however, change points occurred at different times in most of the sub-catchments even for the same time domain (e.g. Genfel and Agulae). This implies that effect of changes in the underlying surface characteristics could be the physical mechanism behind those variations. Human interventions expressed in terms of water abstraction, implementation of large-scale soil and water conservation, deforestation, and afforestation in the upstream catchments are the more likely driving forces of changes in the flow regimes than climatic conditions.

Increasing water abstractions, particularly in the semi-arid catchments of the basin, might have caused the decline of streamflow during dry and small rainy seasons. Several studies, e.g., (Alemayehu et al., 2009; Kifle, 2015; Nyssen et al., 2010) have shown that surface and shallow groundwater development and abstraction for irrigation have significantly increased since the mid-2000s, after implementation of intensive catchment management programmes. Moreover, a strong monotonic trend in streamflow without a significant change in rainfall during the rainy season could be attributed to the large-scale soil and water conservation interventions in the upstream watersheds. For example, Nyssen et al. (2010) and Abraha (2014) reported that integrated catchment management and land use change have significantly reduced streamflow in Geba catchment. On the other hand, soil and water conservation interventions have significantly increased availability of groundwater at sub-catchments level (Alemayehu et al., 2009; Negusse et al., 2013). All these studies are consistent with our findings that observed streamflow alterations in the basin are most likely the result of upper catchments interventions than changing patterns of rainfall. Quantifying the impacts of such factors is beyond the scope of this study and further investigations should be conducted to study the effect of anthropogenic factors on streamflow variability and change.

It is also essential to point out some limitations in this study. Absence of common records of rainfall and streamflow data, limited coverage of streamflow time series data across the basin, data gaps in the peak flow period, are the major limitations that may have increased uncertainties in the trend analyses. The length of the record period used for the trend analyses of rainfall and streamflow varied from 31–63 and 20–43 years, respectively. Analyses using these different record lengths of data may introduce some discrepancy in the analyses.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study presents a detailed statistical analyses on the existence of trends and point changes of rainfall and streamflow in the Upper Tekeze River basin. The analyses was carried out for 21 rainfall and 9 streamflow monitoring stations. Those stations were selected based on the availability and quality of data from 39 streamflow and more than 70 rainfall stations available in the basin. Linkages between the trends in rainfall and streamflow across the whole basin were carefully examined at different scales.

Rainfall over the basin has remained constant in the last four decades. The 19 out of the 21 tested stations experienced neither increasing nor decreasing trends during the dry, short rainy, main rainy seasons and annuals at 95 % confidence level. Furthermore, the result of this study clearly showed that monthly rainfall in the majority of the stations experienced high spatial variability compare to the seasonal and annual time scales. In contrast, trend analyses of different hydrological variables showed that streamflow in most stations has changed significantly. A decreasing trend in dry, short, main rainy seasons and annual totals is dominant in six out of the nine stations, located at the semi-arid areas of the basin. Only one station, located at the basin outlet, exhibited a significant positive significant trend during both the dry and short rainy seasons. The different trend in this station is likely due to the construction of Tekeze hydropower dam in 2009. The remaining two out of the nine stations stayed constant in all seasons. Findings from both MK and Pettitt tests are consistent in all seasons and stations, but the timing of change points is different for most station.

Surprisingly, our results showed that there is no linkages/patterns between the trends in rainfall and streamflow in the basin. This suggests that the change in streamflow is influenced by factors other than rainfall. A week relationship between rainfall and streamflow leads to the conclusion that the significant trends in streamflow could be due to significant changes over time of catchment characteristics, including land use/cover change, catchment management interventions and water abstractions in the upstream.

The findings from this study are useful as a pre-requisite for studying the effects of catchment management dynamics on the hydrological variabilities. Statistical trend analyses investigates only the trend of historical data without being able to identify the causes of those trends. Therefore, further investigations are needed to verify and quantify the hydrological changes shown in statistical tests by identifying the physical mechanisms behind those changes.

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

Acknowledgement. This study was carried out with the support of Netherland Fellowship Programme (NUFFIC) and Tigray Agricultural Research Institute (TARI). The authors would like to thank the Ethiopian National Meteorological Agency for providing the weather data and Ethiopian ministry of water resources for providing hydrological data of the study area.

References

Abdul Aziz, O. I., and Burn, D. H.: Trends and variability in the hydrological regime of the Mackenzie River Basin, J. Hydrol., 319, 282-294, 2006.

Abeysingha, N. S., Singh, M., Sehgal, V. K., Khanna, M., and Pathak, H.: AnalysisAnalyses of trends in streamflow and its linkages with rainfall and anthropogenic factors in Gomti River basin of North India, Theor. Appl. Climatol., 123, 785-799, 2015.

Abraha, A., Ashenafi, A.: Modeling Hydrological Responses to Changes in Land Cover and Climate in Geba River Basin, Northern Ethiopia, PhD, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 2014.

Alemayehu, F., Taha, N., Nyssen, J., Girma, A., Zenebe, A., Behailu, M., Deckers, S., and Poesen, J.: The impacts of watershed management on land use and land cover dynamics in Eastern Tigray (Ethiopia), Resour. Conserv. Recy., 53, 192-198, 2009.

Awulachew, S. B., Yilma, A. D., Loulseged, M., Loiskandl, W., Ayana, M., and Alamirew, T.: Water resources and irrigation development in Ethiopia, Iwmi, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2007.

Belay, K. T., Van Rompaey, A., Poesen, J., Van Bruyssel, S., Deckers, J., and Amare, K.: Spatial Analysis of Land Cover Changes in Eastern Tigray (Ethiopia) from 1965 to 2007: Are There Signs of a Forest Transition?, Land degrad. Devel 26, 680-689, 2015

Belete, K.: Sedimentation and Sediment Handling at Dams in Tekeze Riiver Basin, Ethiopia. PhD thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway, 2007.

Bizuneh, A., Abebe: Modeling the Effect of Climate and Land Use Change on the Water Resources in Northern Ethiopia: the Case of Suluh River Basin, PhD, Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany, 2013.

Burn, D., Cunderlik, J. M., and Pietroniro,A.: Hydrological trends and variability in the Liard River basin, Hydrol. Sci. J., 49, 53-67, 2004.

Conway, D., and Hulme, M.: Recent fluctuations in precipitation and runoff over the Nile sub-basins and their impact on main Nile discharge, Climatic Change, 25, 127-151, 1993.

Derin, Y., and Yilmaz, K. K.: Evaluation of multiple satellite-based precipitation products over complex topography, J. Hydrometeorol., 15, 1498-1516, 2014.

Descheemaeker, K., Nyssen, J., Rossi, J., Poesen, J., Haile, M., Raes, D., Muys, B., Moeyersons, J., and Deckers, S.: Sediment deposition and pedogenesis in exclosures in the Tigray highlands, Ethiopia, Geoderma, 132, 291-314,

Descheemaeker, K., Poesen, J., Borselli, L., Nyssen, J., Raes, D., Haile, M., Muys, B., and Deckers, J.: Runoff curve numbers for steep hillslopes with natural vegetation in semi-arid tropical highlands, northern Ethiopia, Hydrol. Process., 22, 4097-4105, 2008.

Dinku, T., Ceccato, P., Grover-Kopec, E., Lemma, M., Connor, S., and Ropelewski, C.: Validation of satellite rainfall over East Africa's complex topography, Int. j. remote sens., 28, 1503-1526, 2007.

Dixon, H., Lawler, D. M., Shamseldin, A. Y., Webster, P., Demuth, S., Gustard, A., Planos, E., Seatena, F., and Servat, E.: The effect of record length on the analysis of river flow trends in Wales and central England, Climate variability and change: hydrol. impacts, 490-495, 2006.

Funk, C. C., Peterson, P. J., Landsfeld, M. F., Pedreros, D. H., Verdin, J. P., Rowland, J. D., Romero, B. E., Husak, G. J., Michaelsen, J. C., and Verdin, A. P.: A quasi-global precipitation time series for drought monitoring, US Geol. Surv. Data Series, 832, 2014.

Gao, P., Mu, X.-M., Wang, F., and Li, R.: Changes in streamflow and sediment discharge and the response to human activities in the middle reaches of the Yellow River, Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci., 15, 1-10, 2011.

Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., doi:10.5194/hess-2016-318, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.
Published: 29 August 2016
© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

Gebrehiwot, T., van der Veen, A., and Maathuis, B.: Spatial and temporal assessment of drought in the Northern highlands of Ethiopia, Int. J. Appl. Earth Obs , 13, 309-321, 2011.

Gebremicael, T. G., Mohamed, Y. A., Betrie, G. D., van der Zaag, P., and Teferi, E.: Trend analysisanalyses of runoff and sediment fluxes in the Upper Blue Nile basin: A combined analyses of statistical tests, physically based models and landuse maps, J.Hydro., 482, 57-68, 2013.

Gebreyohannes, T., De Smedt, F., Walraevens, K., Gebresilassie, S., Hussien, A., Amare, K., Deckers, J., and Gebrehiwot, K.: Application of a spatially distributed water balance model for assessing surface water and groundwater resources in the Geba basin, Tigray, Ethiopia, J. Hydro., 499, 110-123, 2013.

Grieser, J., Gommes, R., and Bernardi, M.: New LocClim–the local climate estimator of FAO, Geophysical Research Abstracts, 8, 0305, 2006.

Hannaford, J.: Climate-driven changes in UK river flows: A review of the evidence, Prog. Phys. Geogr., 39, 29-48, 2015.

Hessels, T. M.: Comparison and Validation of Several Open Access Remotely Sensed Rainfall Products for the Nile Basin, PhD Thesis, Delft University Of Technology, The Netherlands, 2015.

Hirsch, R. M., and Slack, J. R.: A Nonparametric Trend Test for Seasonal Data with Serial Dependence, Water Resour. Res, 20, 727-732, 10.1029/WR020i006p00727, 1984.

IPCC: Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdon, New York, USA, 2007.

Jones, J. R., Schwartz, J. S., Ellis, K. N., Hathaway, J. M., and Jawdy, C. M.: Temporal variability of precipitation in the Upper Tennessee Valley, J. Hydrol., 3, 125-138, 2015.

Katsanos, D., Retalis, A., and Michaelides, S.: Validation of a high-resolution precipitation database (CHIRPS) over Cyprus for a 30-year period, Atmos.Res., 169, 459-464, 2015.

Kendall, M.: Rank Correlation Methods, Charles Griffi, London, 1975.

Kifle, W.: Creating new groundwater through landscape restoration in Tigray, northern Ethiopia: an approach for climate change., International Conference on Improving Food Security in the Face of Climate Change in Africa, July 13-15, 2015, Mekelle, Ethiopia, 2015.

Kim, U., Kaluarachchi, J. J., and Smakhtin, V. U.: Climate change impacts on hydrology and water resources of the Upper Blue Nile River Basin, Ethiopia, IWMI Research Report., 126, 27 pp., 2008

Longobari, A. and Villani, P.: Trend analysisanalyses of annual and seasonal rainfall time series in the Mediterranean area, Int. J. Climatol., 30, 1538-1546, 2009.

Love, D., Uhlenbrook, S., Corzo-Perez, G., Twomlow, S., and van der Zaag, P.: Rainfall–interception–evaporation–runoff relationships in a semi-arid catchment, northern Limpopo basin, Zimbabwe, Hydrol. Sci. J., 55, 687-703, 2010.

Ma, Z., Kang, S., Zhang, L., Tong, L., and Su, X.: Impacts of climate variability and human activity on streamflow for a river basin in arid region of northwest China, J. Hydrol., 352, 239-249, 2008.

Masih, I., Uhlenbrook, S., Maskey, S., and Smakhtin, V.: Streamflow trends and climate linkages in the Zagros Mountains, Iran, Climatic Change, 104, 317-338, 2011.

Mathews, R. and Richter, B. D.: Application of the Indicators of Hydrologic Alteration Software in Environmental Flow Set-ting1, JAWRA J. Am. Water Resour. Assoc., 43, 1400–1413, 2007.

Medvigy, D., and Beaulieu, C.: Trends in daily solar radiation and precipitation coefficients of variation since 1984, J. Climate, 25, 1330-1339, 2012.

Mohamed, Y., and Savenije, H.: Impact of climate variability on the hydrology of the Sudd wetland: signals derived from long term (1900–2000) water balance computations, Wetl. Ecol.Manage, 191-198, 2014.

Návar, J.: Hydro-climatic variability and perturbations in Mexico's north-western temperate forests, Ecohydrology, 8, 1065-1072, 2015.

Negusse, T., Yazew, E., and Tadesse, N.: Quantification of the impact of integrated soil and water conservation measures on groundwater availability in Mendae catchment, Abraha We-Atsebaha, eastern Tigray, Ethiopia, MEJS., 5, 117-136, 2013.

Negusse, T., Yazew, E., and Tadesse, N.: Quantification of the impact of integrated soil and water conservation measures on groundwater availability in Mendae catchment, Abraha We-Atsebaha, eastern Tigray, Ethiopia, MEJS., 5, 117-136, 2013.

NMSA (National Meteorological service Agency): Climatic and agro-climatic resources of Ethiopia. NMSA Meteorological Research Report Series. V1, No. 1, Addis Ababa, 137p, 1996.

Nyssen, J., Clymans, W., Descheemaeker, K., Poesen, J., Vandecasteele, I., Vanmaercke, M., Zenebe, A., Van Camp, M., Haile, M., and Haregeweyn, N.: Impact of soil and water conservation measures on catchment hydrological response a case in north Ethiopia, Hydrol. Process, 1880-1895, 2010.

Nyssen, J., Vandenreyken, H., Poesen, J., Moeyersons, J., Deckers, J., Haile, M., and Govers, G.: Rainfall erosivity and variability in the Northern Ethiopian Highlands, J. Hydrol., 311, 172-187, 2005

Pano, N., Frasheri, A., and Avdyli, B.: The climatic change impact in water potential processes on the Albanian hydrographic river network, Proceedings of the 5th Biennial Conference of the International Environmental Modelling and Software Society, iEMSs 2010, , 927-933, 2010.

PettitPettittt, A. N.: A Non-Parametric Approach to the Change-Point Problem, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series C (Applied Statistics), 28, 126-135, 1979.

Saraiva Okello, A. M. L., Masih, I., Uhlenbrook, S., Jewitt, G. P. W., van der Zaag, P., and Riddell, E.: Drivers of spatial and temporal variability of streamflow in the Incomati River basin, Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci., 19, 657-673, 2015.

Seleshi, Y., and Zanke, U.: Recent changes in rainfall and rainy days in Ethiopia, Int. J. Climatol., 24, 973-983, 2004.

Shi, W., Yu, X., Liao, W., Wang, Y., and Jia, B.: Spatial and temporal variability of daily precipitation concentration in the Lancang River basin, China, J. Hydrol., 495, 197-207, 2013.

Shukla, S., McNally, A., Husak, G., Funk, C.: A seasonal agricultural drought forecast system for food-insecure regions of East Africa. Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 18, 3907–921, 2014.

Simpson, J., Adler, R. F., and North, G. R.: A proposed tropical rainfall measuring mission (TRMM) satellite, Bull. Am.Meteorol.Soc., 69, 278-295, 1988.

Sushant, S., Balasubramani, K., and Kumaraswamy, K.: Spatio-temporal Analysis of Rainfall Distribution and Variability in the Twentieth Century, Over the Cauvery Basin, South India, in: Environmental Management of River Basin Ecosystems, 21-41, 2015.

Taylor, V., Schulze, R., and Jewitt, G. P. W.: Application of the Indicators of Hydrological Alteration method to the Mkomazi River, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Afr. J. Aquatic Sci., 28, 1–11, 2003.

Tefera,W.: Integtating Geo-information for the management of river basins in Ethiopian part of the Nile basin, MSc Thesis, ITC, Enschede, The Netherlands, 2003.

Tekleab, S., Mohamed, Y., and Uhlenbrook, S.: Hydro-climatic trends in the Abay/Upper Blue Nile basin, Ethiopia, Phys. Chem. Earth, Parts A/B/C, 61-62, 32-42, 2013.

Tesemma, Z. K., Mohamed, Y. A., and Steenhuis, T. S.: Trends in rainfall and runoff in the Blue Nile Basin: 1964–2003, Hydrol. Process, 24, 3747-3758, 2010.

Thiemig, V., Rojas, R., Zambrano-Bigiarini, M., Levizzani, V., and De Roo, A.: Validation of satellite-based precipitation products over sparsely gauged African river basins, J. Hydrometeorol., 13, 1760-1783, 2012.

Toté, C., Patricio, D., Boogaard, H., van der Wijngaart, R., Tarnavsky, E., and Funk, C.: Evaluation of Satellite Rainfall Estimates for Drought and Flood Monitoring in Mozambique, Remote Sens., 7, 2015.

Wang, W., Shao, Q., Yang, T., Peng, S., Xing, W., Sun, F., and Luo, Y.: Quantitative assessment of the impact of climate variability and human activities on runoff changes: a case study in four catchments of the Haihe River basin, China, Hydrol. Process, 27, 1158-1174, 2013.

Wang, W., Wei, J., Shao, Q., Xing, W., Yong, B., Yu, Z., and Jiao, X.: Spatial and temporal variations in hydro-climatic variables and runoff in response to climate change in the Luanhe River basin, China, Stoch. Env. Res. Risk. A., 29, 1117-1133, 2015.

Wilk, J., and Hughes, D. A.: Simulating the impacts of land-use and climate change on water resource availability for a large south Indian catchment, Hydrol. Sci. J., 47, 19-30, 2002.

Yazew, H., E, : Development and management of irrigated lands in Tigray, Ethiopia, PhD, UNESCO-IHE, Institute for Water Education, Delft, The Netherlands, 2005.

Yue, S., Pilon, P., and Phinney, B.: Canadian streamflow trend detection: impacts of serial and cross-correlation, Hydrol. Sci. J., 48, 51-63, 2003.

Yue, S., Pilon, P., Phinney, B., and Cavadias, G.: The influence of autocorrelation on the ability to detect trend in hydrological series, Hydrol. Process., 16, 1807-1829, 2002.

Zenebe, A.: Assessment of spatial and temporal variability of river discharge, sediment yield and sediment-fixed nutrient export in Geba River catchment, northern Ethiopia, PhD, Stoch. Env. Res. Risk. A.,, KU Leuven,, Leuven, Belgium, 2009.

Zhan, C. S., Jiang, S. S., Sun, F. B., Jia, Y. W., Niu, C. W., and Yue, W. F.: Quantitative contribution of climate change and human activities to runoff changes in the Wei River basin, China, Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci., 18, 3069-3077, 2014.

Zhang, Q., Singh, V. P., Sun, P., Chen, X., Zhang, Z., and Li, J.: Precipitation and streamflow changes in China: changing patterns, causes and implications, J. Hydrol., 410, 204-216, 2011.

Zhang, S., Lu, X. X., Higgitt, D. L., Chen, C.-T. A., Han, J., and Sun, H.: Recent changes of water discharge and sediment load in the Zhujiang (Pearl River) Basin, China, Glob. Planet.Chang., 60, 365-380, 2008.

Zhao, J., Huang, Q., Chang, J., Liu, D., Huang, S., and Shi, X.: AnalysisAnalyses of temporal and spatial trends of hydro-climatic variables in the Wei River Basin, Environ. Res., 139, 55-64, 2015.

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

Table 1. General information of rainfall stations, latitude and longitude, altitude (Alt.) in m.a.s.l, mean annual rainfall (mm yr^{-1}), standard deviation (mm yr^{-1}), and % age of missing data

Station name	Lat°	Long°	Alt. (m)	Recording period	Analyses period	Mean	SD	CV (%)	Missing data (%)
Mekelle	13.45	39.53	2260	1952-2015	1953-2015	576	141	24	0.0
Mychew	12.69	39.54	2432	1953-2015	1953-2015	697	158	23	6.3
Axum	14.12	38.74	2200	1962-2015	1963-2015	690	159	23	9.4
Gonder	12.60	37.50	2316	1952-2015	1964-2015	1090	195	18	0.0
Adwa	14.16	38.90	1950	1964-2015	1967-2015	705	176	24	7.6
Mykinetal	13.94	38.99	1815	1967-2015	1967-2015	585	129	22	8.1
Shire	14.10	38.28	1920	1963-2015	1968-2015	953	203	21	10.1
Adigrat	14.00	39.27	2470	1970-2015	1970-2015	596	172	29	2.1
Adigudem	13.16	39.13	2100	1975-2015	1971-2015	498	156	31	2.2
E/hamus	14.18	39.56	2700	1971-2015	1971-2015	651	214	33	2.2
Hawzen	13.98	39.43	2255	1971-2015	1971-2015	505	116	23	6.6
Illala	13.52	39.50	2000	1975-2015	1975-2015	563	138	25	4.9
H/Selam	13.65	39.17	2630	1973-2015	1973-2015	685	168	24	0.0
AbiAdi	13.62	39.02	1850	1961-2015	1973-2015	861	246	29	2.3
Samre	13.13	39.13	1920	1967-2015	1978-2015	650	188	29	6.1
D/tabor	11.85	38.00	2969	1974-2015	1974-2015	1502	264	17	2.3
Dengolat	13.19	39.21	1950	1975-2015	1975-2015	617	166	27	2.4
Lalibela	12.03	39.05	2450	1972-2015	1978-2015	789	169	21	5.3
Wukro	13.79	39.60	1995	1962-2015	1985-2015	485	139	29	9.4
Kulmesk	11.93	39.20	2360	1973-2015	1985-2015	668	180	27	3.2
Debarik	13.15	37.90	2850	1955-2015	1984-2015	1104	231	21	6.2

Table 2. Statistical indices for accuracy measurement of satellite rainfall products

Statistical measure	Equation	Best value
Relative Mean Absolute Error (R_{MAE})	$(1/N\sum\lvert(y-x)\rvert/(\bar{x})$	0
Nash-Sutcliffe efficiency (N_{SE})	$1-(\sum(y-x)^2/(\sum(x-\bar{x})^2)$	1
BIAS	$\sum y/\sum x$	1
Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	$\frac{\sum(x-\bar{x})(y-\bar{y})}{\sqrt{(x-\bar{x})^2}\sqrt{(y-\bar{y})^2}}$	1

Table 3. General Information of the hydrological flow monitoring stations

Station name	Lat.	Long.	Alt.	Catchment area (km^2)	Recording period	Analyses period	Annual flow (m^{3}s^{-1})	Missing (%)
Siluh	13.85	39.51	2230	967	1973-2015	1973-2015	1.0	4.6
Illala	13.53	39.50	2004	341	1980-2015	1980-2015	0.6	2.8
Genfel	13.80	39.60	1997	733	1992-2015	1992-2015	0.6	2.1
Werie	13.85	39.00	1380	1770	1967-2015	1994-2015	10.1	0.8
Agulae	13.69	39.58	1994	692	1992-2015	1992-2015	1.1	0.3
Geba 1	13.6	39.38	1748	2445	1967-2015	1990-2015	3.9	4.0
Geba 2	13.46	39.02	1370	4590	1994-2015	1994-2015	14.2	0.0
Tekeze 1	12.60	39.19	1490	1002	1994-2015	1994-2015	3.0	3.2
Tekeze 2	13.74	38.20	845	45694	1969-2015	1994-2015	219.5	0.0

Geba 1 and 2 are Geba at Mekelle and Adikumsi and Tekeze 1 and 2 are Tekeze at Kulmesk and Embamadre.

Table 4. Summary results of MK, Z statistics on seasonal and annual rainfall trends. Negative/positive Z value indicates a decreasing/increasing trend and in bold a statistical significant trend at 5 % confidence level (Z= ±1.96).

station/season	Rainy season	Dry season	Short rainy	annual
	Jun to Sep	Oct to Feb	Mar to May	Jan to Dec
Mekelle (AP)	-1.5	1.7	-1.2	-1.8
Mychew	-1.1	1.0	0.9	-0.7
Axum	1.5	0.3	0.3	**2.5**
Gonder	1.1	-1.7	1.8	0.8
Adwa	**4.6**	1.6	1.1	0.8
Mykinetal	1.7	-1.4	-1.8	-0.3
Shire	1.6	1.4	1.5	**-2.5**
Adigrat	-0.4	1.1	1.1	-0.1
Adigudem	0.0	0.1	-0.8	-0.3
Edagahamus	-0.6	-1.2	-1.7	-1.1
Hawzen	0.7	-1.4	-1.1	-0.4
Illala	1.5	0.3	1.6	1.6
Hagereselam	0.2	-0.3	-1.7	-1.0
AbiAdi	0.9	-1.5	1.9	1.9
Debretabour	1.3	1.5	0.1	1.9
Dengolat	-0.6	0.1	1.7	1.9
Lalibela	0.8	-0.6	-1.1	-1.1
Wukro	-1.4	0.8	1.2	1.6
Kulmesk	0.5	-0.3	0.1	0.1
Debark	0.3	0.4	1.8	1.7
Samre	-0.3	-1.9	-0.3	-0.3

Table 5. Summary results of MK, Z statistics on streamflow trends. Negative/positive Z value indicates a decreasing/increasing trend and in bold a statistical significant trend at 5 % confidence level (Z= ±1.96).

Period	**Siluh**	**Genfel**	**Agulae**	**Illala**	**Werie**	**Geba 1**	**Geba 2**	**Tekeze 1**	**Tekeze 2**
Record length (yr)	1973-2015	1992-2015	1992-2015	1980-2015	1994-2015	1991-2015	1994-2015	1994-2015	1994-2015
	43	23	24	36	22	25	21	21	22
Annual	**-4.5**	**-3.1**	-0.9	-0.7	-1.1	**-2.1**	**-1.7**	0.6	1.0
Rainy season	**-3.1**	**-3.2**	-0.4	0.4	0.2	**-2.1**	**-2.8**	1.0	0.1
Short rainy	**-2.4**	**-3.1**	**-3.5**	**-3.1**	1.1	-1.5	2.7	0.63	**3.9**
Dry season	**-5.0**	**-3.0**	0.3	**-3.0**	-0.9	**-2.2**	**-3.3**	-0.2	**3.4**
Jan	**-5.1**	**-2.3**	-0.7	-2.1	1.4	**-2.7**	**-3.1**	0.4	1.6
Feb	**-4.5**	**-2.6**	-0.2	-1.4	0.8	**-2.8**	-0.4	-0.0	0.8
Mar	**-5.9**	-1.5	-0.5)	-1.6	1.2	**-3.3**	-0.2	0.4	1.3
Apr	**-4.0**	**-2.4**	**-4.0**	**-2.9**	0.9	**-2.1**	**-2.6**	0.7	**2.4**
May	**-4.8**	**-2.1**	**-2.6**	**-2.2**	1.3	**-2.1**	-0.3	0.7	**2.3**
Jun	-1.4	-1.9	-0.9	-1.6	0.6	-1.5	-0.2	0.6	1.2
Jul	**-4.7**	**-2.6**	-0.7	-1.0	-0.5	-1.6	-0.4	-0.3	-0.1
Aug	-0.9	**-2.2**	0.8	1.0	-1.2	**-2.0**	**-3.4**	0.3	-1.1
Sep	1.1	-1.6	-0.3	1.5	-0.1	-1.4	-0.4	0.6	0.3
Oct	**-6.7**	-1.8	-0.3	-0.8	**3.8**	**-2.4**	-0.6	0.3	0.9
Nov	**-4.7**	**-4.8**	-1.2	-1.5	0.7	-1.5	-1.1	0.3	0.7
Dec	**-4.7**	**-2.6**	-0.2	-1.5	1.2	**-2.4**	**-3.4**	0.2	0.4

Table 6. Summary results of MK, Z statistics on IHA trends. Negative/positive Z value indicates a decreasing/increasing trend and in bold a statistical significant trend at 5 % confidence level (Z= ±1.96).

IHA parameters	Siluh	Genfel	Agulae	Illala	Werie	Geba 1	Geba 2	Tekeze 1	Tekeze 2
	1973-2015	1992-2015	1992-2015	1980-2015	1994-2015	1990-2015	1994-2015	1994-2015	1994-2015
record length (yr)	43	23	24	36	22	25	21	21	22
1-day minimum	**-4.3**	**-3.2**	-0.7	**-3.4**	0.8	**-3.6**	**-3.8**	-0.6	**2.8**
3- day minimum	**-3.5**	**-4.2**	-0.8	**-3.6**	0.8	**-3.4**	**-3.8**	-0.5	**2.2**
7-day minimum	**-3.5**	**-3.5**	-1.3	**-3.1**	0.7	**-3.9**	**-3.5**	-0.6	**2.1**
1-day maximum	**-5.7**	-1.0	-0.1	0.7	-1.3	**-2.7**	-1.0	0.8	-1.0
3-day maximum	**-5.5**	-1.3	-0.7	0.7	-0.9	**-2.6**	-0.8	-0.1	-1.5
7-day maximum	**-6.4**	**-2.2**	-0.4	0.1	-1.3	**-2.4**	-0.7	-0.6	-1.2
Rise rate	-1.1	-0.4	-1.3	1.0	1.2	-1.5	-1.3	1.0	-0.3
Fall rate	0.8	2.3	3.9	1.6	1.4	2.8	0.8	-2.3)	-3.8

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

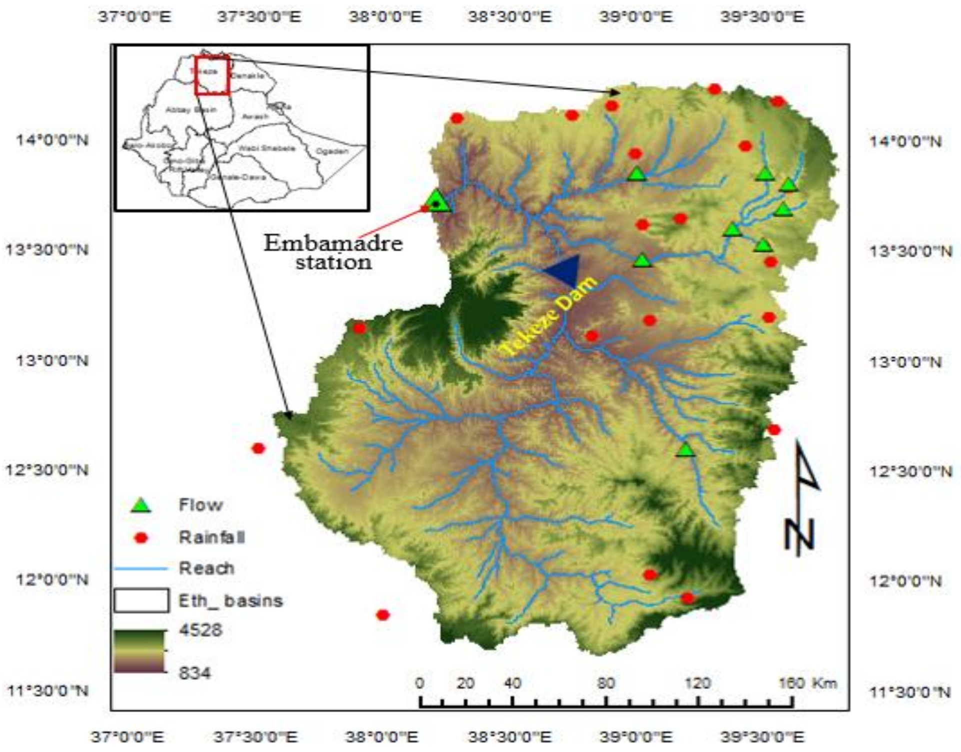

Figure 1. Location and distributions of rainfall and streamflow monitoring stations in the Upper Tekeze-Atbara River Basin.

© Author(s) 2016. CC-BY 3.0 License.

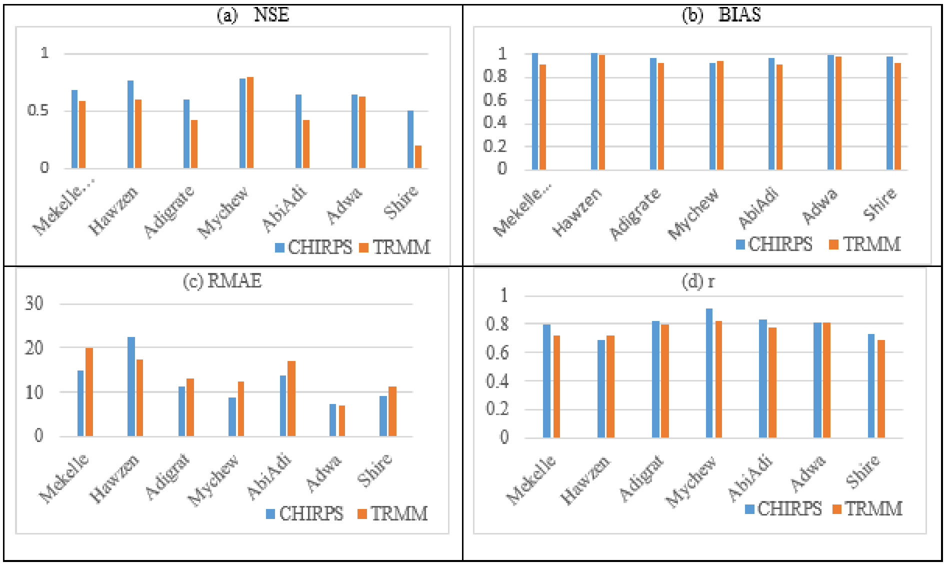

Figure 2. Comparison of satellite rainfall data against measured rainfall data

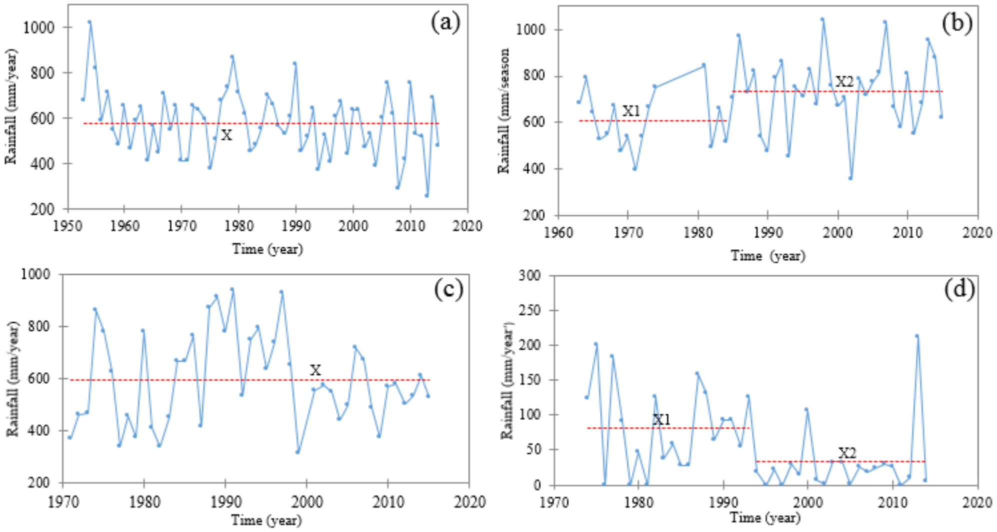

Figure 3. Pettitt homogeneity test of selected rainfall stations (a) annual rainfall in Mekelle (AP), (b) annual rainfall in Axum, (c) annual rainfall in Adigrat, (d) short rainy season in AbiAdi. X1 and X2 are average values of rainfall before and after change point.

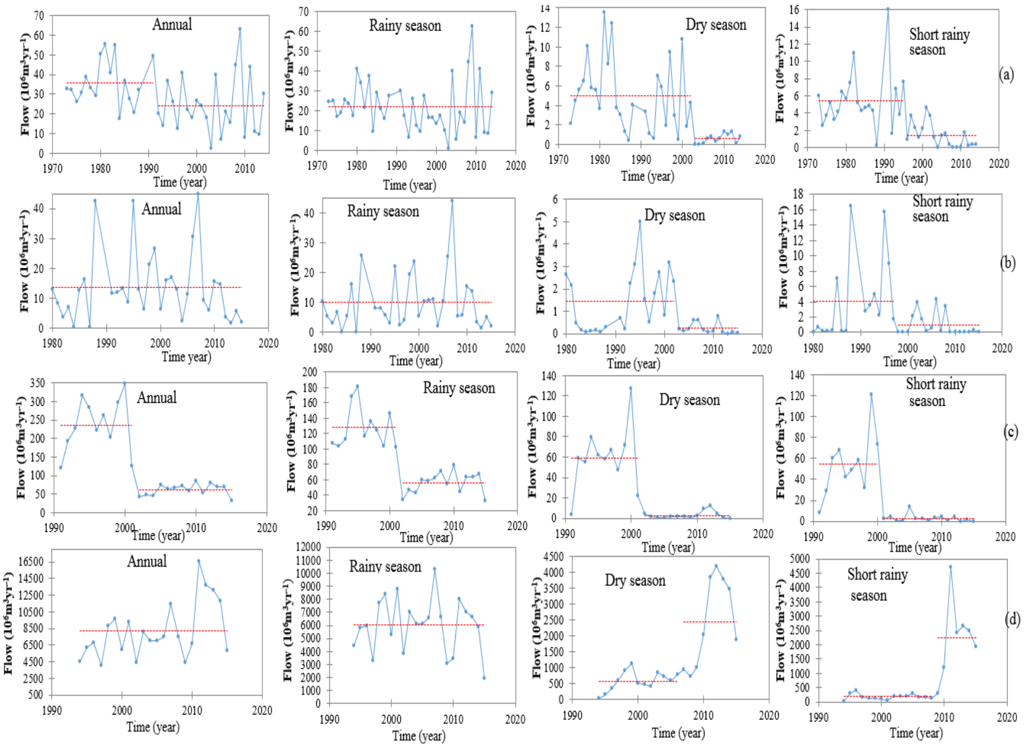

Figure 4. Annual and seasonal streamflow abrupt changes as determined by Pettitt test at (a) Siluh, (b) Illala, (c) Geba and, (d) Embamadre