Dams and Infant Mortality in Africa*

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November 22, 2010

Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of dams on infant mortality using 32 waves of DHS data that have GPS locations of households. This allows us to estimate the impact of dams on households that reside upstream, downstream, and within its immediate vicinity. We use a sample of over 900,000 children in 17 countries in Africa. In contrast to earlier research on the impact of dams on agricultural productivity and poverty at the district level in India (Duflo and Pande, 2007), we examine child-level outcomes, measure the impacts of dams on households that are both close and very far to the dam, and exploit variation in floodplain and non-floodplain regions that is more important for agricultural production in Sub-Saharan Africa than India. For non-migrant households we find the following. First, children born in households that reside immediately downstream to a dam experience a significant reduction of 3.84-4.60% in infant mortality. This is because the benefits of irrigation services of the dam are large for downstream households geographically close to the dam. Second, for children born in households that reside further downstream, infant mortality significantly increases by 2.18-2.36%. This is because dams reduce water levels downriver, and households cannot access compensating irrigation services from dams, or benefit from the reduced volatility of water flow that dams provide. The infant mortality increase rises sharply to 7.57% for children born farther downstream in floodplain areas, as the reduced water level causes degradation of the wetland ecosystem which is crucial to household livelihoods in Africa. Children born in the vicinity of the dam experience increased infant mortality of at least 2.27%, due to increased malaria incidence and reduced agricultural productivity near the dam reservoir. This effect increases monotonically to more than 10% with the number of dams in children's vicinity.

JEL classification: I18, J13, O22, O55

Keywords: Dams, infant mortality, Africa

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[*] We are grateful to Imran Rasul, Orazio Attanasio, Marcos Vera Hernandez, Cristina Santos, seminar participants at the EDEPO seminar at the Institute of Fiscal Studies and the student lunch seminar at UCL, and colleagues at the Department of Economics, University College London for their comments. We also benefited from conversations with Eric Chaney, Rebecca Thornton, Richard Akresh, and Gordon Hanson. All errors remain our own.

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"It completely regulates flooding in the Omo, which has been a major problem."

-Ethiopia Prime Minister Zenawi, on Gibe III dam planned for the Omo River, 2009.

"We will suffer because there will be no more floods. I don't think the government likes the Omo tribes. They are going to destroy us."

-Mursi tribe elder, on Gibe III dam being built upstream, Ethiopia, 2009.

1 Introduction

The debate on the welfare effects of large dams has become increasingly vocal in recent years. Many developing countries have undertaken very large investments in dam construction to increase irrigation and hydroelectricity generation capacity, to the extent that dams have been placed on nearly half the world's rivers (Duflo and Pande, 2007). Dam construction has undoubtedly played an important role in economic development, with 30-40% of the irrigated area and 19% of the total electricity generation in the world being dependent on dam operation (World Commission on Dams, 2000). However the effects of dam construction have often been visibly harmful, and often extremely severe. Documented consequences include flooding beyond the reservoir, increased saline content in the soil, and detrimental changes in cropping patterns forced by altered river flow patterns. Declining water levels and changing currents due to upstream dams can also permanently alter the river ecosystem, as well as the livelihoods of communities who rely on this ecosystem and the natural flow of the river. Whether these various dam effects have a direct impact on infant survival is a question that is yet to be answered. Ideally the answer to this question should be a fundamental underpinning of the dam-building process. This paper investigates whether dam operations have indeed had an impact on infant mortality in Africa; the continent that is currently undergoing a surge in dam construction and where the policy implications of this analysis are highly relevant.

To the best of our knowledge this is the first paper that attempts to identify the impact of dams on infant mortality. The findings of our analysis are meant to improve on what is already known on the welfare effects of dams by investigating this question for a very large sample of children across several countries in Africa. If dam operations have any significant effects on infant mortality, then our sample alone would account for more than half a million children who potentially experience these effects. We additionally separate the impacts of dams in neighbouring regions to households from the effect of dams in regions farther away along the river, which is another contribution to the existing literature. Disaggregating dam impacts based on distance is important, as the effect of dams on river water levels and amplitude of rainfall shocks changes from within the extent of the dam irrigation network to outside this extent farther downriver. Additionally, this is the first paper we are aware of that uses estimations at the level of the individual child to assess the impact of dams on a welfare outcome.

Our empirical analysis faces some fairly weighty confounding factors. The first issue is that regions selected for dam construction are likely to be very different from those not chosen, as dams require moderate to steep river gradients to operate. There are also political and other regional factors besides geography that determine dam placement. Hence even though we have significant regional variation in intensity of dam construction, a simple comparison of infant mortality probability between these regions will lead to biased estimates of dam impacts. To address this we exploit the fact that there is variation in child exposure to dams at birth both across regions, and over time due to variation in the timing of dam construction and child birth. This allows us to use a difference-in-difference (DID) estimation using this variation across both regions and time in exposure to dams at birth to ascertain dam impacts on infant mortality. To additionally check that our results are not driven by differing regional trends between dammed and non-dammed basins, or by endogenous placement of dams to areas with higher or lower infant mortality, we show that there is no correlation between child mortality between ages 0-12 months and the number of dams built 5 years or more after children are born. We also implement placebo regressions using dams located very far away from children as the source of exposure rather than dams that are closer, and ensure that estimated impacts shrink as a result. To check for bias from omitted geographical factors within the river basin, we exploit dam dependence on river gradients for operation to construct regional propensity scores for dam placement. We then include the propensity score as a regressor in our specifications to ensure no geographical omitted unobservables are driving the results.

The second major issue is that of selective migration bias. The enmasse displacement of people due to dams as well as voluntary migration potentially leads to highly selected samples of mothers in each region, making it potentially difficult to separate dam effects from unobserved maternal characteristics that influence both the decision to migrate to particular regions and the probability of infant survival. To deal with this concern we identify women interviewed in our sample who have never migrated, and carry out our main analysis only for children born to these non-migrant mothers. This reduces sample selection bias from parental migration out of areas harmfully affected by dams into areas that are benefited. Non-migrants are more comparable between different categories of dam exposure as they are present over time in the same place while dams are constructed. Given that households are welfare-maximisers, we can reasonably expect that non-migrants choose to stay at their current place of residence as it maximises the net gains from all harmful and beneficial impacts of dams subject to available household resources. However non-migrant mothers may also differ on unobservable factors that are potentially correlated with dam coverage. We therefore check our results carefully for any remaining sample selection bias. We first show that non-migrant mothers are not systematically better or worse off in terms of educational attainment, height, and wealth status between different categories of dam coverage. We then argue that the lack of correlation we find between infant mortality risk and dams built years after children would be past infancy alleviates concerns that our results are driven by systematic differences between non-migrant households.

Since dam effects vary depending on where households are located along the river network relative to the dam, we define whether dams are upstream, downstream, or in the same vicinity as households by using river drainage basins. The entire African continent can be broken down into these river basins, and each basin is coded so that we can identify whether it is upstream or downstream along the river network from every other basin. We identify which river basins households and dams lie in, and then define whether dams are upstream, downstream, or in the same basin as households using the basin river linkages. We then exploit the regional variation in our sample to separately identify the effects of upstream, downstream, and within-basin dams on infant mortality.

The results for children of non-migrants indicate that each dam in the neighbouring upstream river basin reduces infant mortality by 3.84-4.60%, conditional on other forms of dam exposure at birth. In contrast, upstream dams farther up the river increase infant mortality by 2.18-2.36% on average. This is in contrast to Duflo and Pande (2007) which finds that all upstream dams improve agricultural productivity and reduce poverty in districts lying downriver in India. However Duflo and Pande (2007) does not separate the effects of neighbouring upstream dams from upstream dams farther upriver. Doing this is important in Africa, where unlike in India there is widespread household reliance on floodplain recession agriculture and wetland ecosystems. Dams provide irrigation services within a designated command area immediately downstream by redirecting river flow, which increases access to water and reduces vulnerability to rainfall shocks. Beyond the command area however, dams significantly reduce the amount of water that flows downriver. While dams also reduce the variance in rainfall shocks downriver via regulated discharges in periods of water shortage, the height of the water level is much more important for the health of the floodplain ecosystem that households depend on. This is reflected by our results which find that infant mortality increases due to upstream dams farther upriver that reduce water levels but are too far away to provide compensating irrigation services. We verify the impact in floodplain regions by showing that upstream dams increase infant mortality by a much larger 7.57% in cropland areas where river runoff is greater than 250 milimetres per year.

Within-basin dams increase infant mortality risk by at least 2.27%, and the harmful effect increase steadily to well past 10% as the number of these dams children are exposed to increases. This is consistent with the results of both Duflo and Pande (2007) and Strobl and Strobl (2010), which find that dams increase vulnerability to rainfall shocks in the region where they are built due to negative impacts of the reservoir on the soil. We verify this by showing that infant mortality increases disproportionately more due to within-basin dams in basins with cropland. We also use geo-spatial data on seasonal malaria incidence to show that mortality increases due to increased malaria in the vicinity of dams built in areas where the malaria transmission season is longer than 3 months a year.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents background information on dams and previous analyses concerning their effects in the African continent and other parts of the world. In Section 3 we describe the data used for our estimations, and outline our empirical strategy for identification of any possible dam effects on infant mortality. The results of these estimations are shown and summarised in Section 4, and results from various robustness checks are also presented. Finally in Section 5 we summarise and discuss the implications of our results.

2 Background

In this section we summarise the geographical and humanitarian effects generated by dams. We then place these effects in the context of Africa, and outline our use of river basins in constructing our null hypotheses about dam impacts on infant mortality.

2.1 Dams and Welfare

Dams have varying and complex impacts on their surrounding areas and the resident population depending on whether these areas are upstream, downstream, or in the immediate vicinity of them, and how far along the river away from the dam these areas are. Illustrating the importance of dams is not a difficult task. Approximately a third of the entire world's irrigated lands rely on dams as mentioned previously. Dams are also estimated to contribute about 12-16% of world food production. Other purposes for which dams are built include hydroelectricity production, flood control, and water supply. Hydropower generated by dams accounts for more than 50% of the national electricity supply in 63 countries (World Commission on Dams, 2000). While there are no studies on the welfare impacts of hydropower generated by dams, hydroelectric dams are usually coupled with irrigation infrastructure built as part of the structure. Their effect on agricultural productivity is therefore assumed to be the same as irrigation dams in Strobl and Strobl (2010), and we do the same for our analysis.

The distributional effects of dam construction, and its effects on agricultural productivity have been investigated previously (Duflo and Pande, 2007; Strobl and Strobl, 2010). The evidence indicates that upstream dams significantly increase agricultural productivity, by providing dam irrigation services in the command area immediately downriver and by regulating water flow to counteract rainfall shocks downriver. Duflo and Pande (2007) also find a decline in poverty incidence among households living downstream from dams in India. However the impact of dams on agriculture is likely to differ depending on the nature of cultivation techniques employed, as well as households' dependence on their surround ecosystem. Farming in Africa is typically based in floodplain recession agriculture, which relies on the cyclical flooding of rivers every year to deposit fertile silts. Dams reduce water levels downriver beyond their irrigation command areas, and can therefore significantly reduce the height of river floodwaters that deposit these silts (Adams, 1985; Barbier and Thompson, 1998; Maingi and Marsh, 2002). This is potentially very detrimental for floodplain agriculture in areas downriver beyond the irrigation command area of the dam, and there is evidence that households dependent on agriculture in these areas also suffer as a result. In North-West Nigeria for instance, the Balokori Dam reduced flood levels by 50%, leading irrigated area to decline by 53% and a quarter of households to abandon dry-season agriculture as a way of life. Similar detrimental impacts on floodplain agriculture have been seen in Niger, Chad, Sudan, Senegal, and Mali (Adams, 2000). While regulated discharges of water from upstream dams can be used to smooth the impact of rainfall shocks downriver, it is unlikely to compensate for the decline in the height of floodwater these dams cause.

The impact of dams on floodplain farmers living downstream may not only be through changes in land productivity. In fact, a river flowing without seasonal fluctuations in water height may improve productivity of surrounding land for certain types of crops and vegetation even if this water height is reduced by upstream dams (Strobl and Strobl, 2010). However floodplain farmers depend on the seasonal flooding of land not just to fertilise the soil with silts, but also to create diversity in soil wetness. This allows risk diversification between dry-land and wetland cultivation, in case seasonal conditions adversely affect either form of agriculture (Adams, 1993). The disappearance of the floodplain may therefore make them more vulnerable to rainfall shocks if there is less diversity in soil types for farmers to exploit in smoothing weather shocks. Floodplain agriculture is also based in experience and specialised skill acquired over generations, as farmers make planting decisions based on past flooding patterns and adapt to varying flood levels by planting different crops (Adams, 1993). The value of this specialised knowledge is likely to be lost if farmers are forced to adopt different cultivation techniques, and they also must bear the cost of adopting these new techniques. The result is a potential decrease in household incomes both for farmers themselves, and for others in the regional economy if household spending contracts and demand for goods and services shrinks. Lower household incomes could then potentially cause greater infant mortality due to malnutrition, reduced child health investments, or illness.

The reduced height of floodwaters downriver from the dam also causes the degradation of wetland ecosystems in floodplains that are fed by the river inundation cycle. African households traditionally have a symbiotic relationship with the wetlands, relying on them for fuel collection, fishing, and dry-season grazing of cattle (Adams, 1993; Rebelo et. al., 2009). Hence dams can potentially cause additional harm to households living downriver via destruction of wetlands, over and above their effect on floodplain agriculture. In terms of general equilibrium impacts, the degradation of wetlands and inability to continue with floodplain recession agriculture will most likely induce out-migration, which in turn reduces economic activity in the region. The reduced demand for land along with the disappearance of valuable wetlands is also likely to drive down land prices, which reduces the real value of land holdings for households that remain. Some of these detrimental effects may be offset by reduced population pressure on local natural resources, but to what extent this occurs is uncertain.

For households immediately downstream from dams the story is very different. The irrigation network provided by dams within the command area greatly reduces the effective variance in rainfall shocks experienced by households who are close enough to use it. The increased irrigation also compensates for the reduction in floodwaters by allowing diversification to other types of agriculture that are less dependent on rainfall. Hence the net effect on welfare for households who reside close enough downriver from the dam to access the command area is purely beneficial, as agricultural productivity is protected against rainfall fluctuations within this area. Increased migration to the command area as well as the presence of the dam site close by also increase economic activity and employment opportunities. There is likely to be inflation in land prices due to increased demand combined with increased value from irrigation benefits that increases the real value of land holdings. There are however potential problems if too much in-migration increases population pressure on existing resources and creates health and sanitation problems. This increased population pressure may increase infant mortality, which would otherwise decline in these areas due to increased household wealth and income.

In the vicinity of the dam there are numerous and conflicting impacts. Creating the dam reservoir requires flooding thousand of square kilometers, often with harsh consequences to people's homes and livelihoods. The reservoir drains a proportionate fraction of its surrounding land known as the catchment area of the dam. A common outcome of the reservoir in this catchment area is increased salinisation and waterlogging of the soil due to rising groundwater levels. This greatly reduces the productivity of the land near the reservoir; a result that has been shown in the literature (McCully, 2001; World Bank, 1997). The reduced land productivity is a potential detriment to household income. There is also evidence in the medical literature of increased malaria incidence among children living near dam reservoirs in Africa (Ghebreyesus et. al., 1999; Lautze et. al., 2007; Yewhalaw et. al., 2009). There are however benefits from increased economic activity around the dam while it is being constructed. Large numbers of labourers are often employed in the construction of these dams, creating a short-lived but large spurt in incomes that may have more sustained impacts in the regional economy via increased demand for goods and services. This increased economic activity often leads to the creation of informal settlements around dam sites, with in-migration of people looking to provide goods and services to dam labourers. On the other hand there are documented harmful impacts on health due to the sudden influx of workers and migrants, such as increased incidence of HIV and AIDS as well as diseases related to poor sanitary conditions (World Commission on Dams, 2000). There are therefore potential impacts of dams on infant mortality within their vicinity through both household income as well as direct exposure to disease. The net effect of these various impacts is however ambiguous

The dam impacts described above are summarised in Figure 1a, where Dam A is an example dam on a river flowing East to West. If we could accurately pinpoint dam catchment and command areas, as well as household locations, our analysis would be made easier. Unfortunately such information on catchment and command areas is unavailable, and the households we use in our analysis can only be located within a ten kilometre radius. We therefore instead use data on river drainage basins, for which upstream and downstream linkages can be determined, and construct our null hypotheses on the different forms of dam exposure based on which of these river basins dams and households are located in. The data on river drainage basins comes from the HYDRO1K dataset released by the US Geological Survey. The drainage basins are defined at six different levels according to size, with level 1 being the largest and level 6 the smallest. The level 6 basins are nested within the level 5 basins, the level 5 basins within the level 4 basins, and so on up to level 1. At the smallest level of regional subdivision, there are 7,131 level 6 basins in the continent with an average area of about 4,200 km^2. Mean basin area increases dramatically to about 18,350 km^2 from level 6 to level 5, and further to about 148,160 km^2 at level 4. We exploit this variation in basin size between levels for our robustness checks.

Figure 1b uses quadrants as theoretical representations of these river basins to illustrate the possible dam impacts on infant mortality based on household locations, which are also depicted. In quadrant I, where Dam A is built, infant mortality is likely to decline among children born in the part of the command area that lies within the quadrant. On the other hand it will probably increase among children born within the catchment area. Dam catchment areas can be reasonably assumed to lie completely within the basin where dams are constructed, as is assumed in Strobl and Strobl (2010) who find that this is the case for most South African dams. Children born in quadrant I are potentially affected by increased economic activity around the dam or increased disease incidence, even if not by changes in agricultural productivity. Children born in quadrant II will experience lower infant mortality risk if their parental households are located in the command area of Dam A built in the neighbouring upstream quadrant I. Those born outside the command area in quadrant II are potentially harmfully affected by the decline in river water level. Again, there are possible gains from increased economic activity around them dam in the neighbouring upstream quadrant. In quadrant III, the upstream dam in quadrant I is too far upriver to compensate for declining water levels with command area irrigation. This is supported by the fact that the average extent of irrigation schemes in Africa since the 1980s has been about 18 km^2, whereas the mean size of our river basins in 4,200 km^2 (Strobl and Strobl, 2010). Gains from regulated discharges of water from the dam could however outweigh the detriments of the reduced height of floodwaters. Those born in quadrant IV are unconnected to the dam by river flow, but may experience general equilibrium effects due to increased economic activity around the dam site in neighbouring quadrant I. However we do not attempt to identify any such impacts of dams on basins unconnected by river flow.

We translate these numerous dam impacts on households in the same or connected river basins into null hypotheses, which are outlined briefly in Table 1. The first column of the table describes each category of dam exposure we will examine, based on the relative locations of the river basins dams and households are located in along the river. The second column shows which households in Figure 1b are being referred to for each null hypothesis by quadrant of residence, assuming Dams A and B are the treatment dams in each category of exposure. The third and fourth columns list the benefits and detriments of dams in each category on households. The final column describes the anticipated net effect of these counteracting benefits and detriments on infant mortality within the household. Households in quadrant I, in the same basin as a dam, can either benefit or suffer due to the dam depending on whether they are located in the catchment or the command area. There are also households in quadrant I who are unaffected. The net effect of dams on infant mortality in the same basin in quadrant I is therefore ambiguous. The net impact of neighbouring upstream dams in quadrant I on infant mortality in quadrant II is similarly ambiguous, as it is determined by whether or not households are located in command areas. The impact on infant mortality in quadrant III of upstream dams farther away in quadrant I is predicted to be harmful. Neighbouring downstream dams and downstream dams farther away should have no impact on agricultural productivity in theory, but there might be effects via increased economic activity or previously uninvestigated channels. We control for the presence of these dams in our analysis, but do not attempt to interpret the cause of possible impacts of these dams. Our analysis therefore focuses on households living in the vicinity or downstream from dams, or quadrants I, II, and III.

2.2 Dams in Africa

Africa is often referred to as the "under-dammed continent". This is because only 5.5% of the continent's renewable water resources are used (compared to 20.4% in Asia) despite it being the driest and least electrified continent in the world. The potential for better exploitation of these water resources is greatest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where only 3.5% of total cultivated area is irrigated (FAO, 2007). There was a spate of dam building across the continent in the latter half of the twentieth century to meet increasing demand for irrigation and industrial water supply. According to the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD), Africa accounted for more than 1,200 large dams at the beginning of the millennium, as well as a host of other reservoirs that are not recorded (ICOLD, 1998). Lack of investment in water infrastructure has nevertheless still left much of the available water resources unused. As a result there is large variation in the number of dams present across different parts of the continent, which we exploit for our empirical analysis.

We use the geo-referenced database on African dams released by the Aquastat programme of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 2006 to identify the geographic locations of dams across the continent of Africa. The FAO used the World Register of Dams, national reports and experts, and the internet to compile the database, which includes both large dams as defined by ICOLD and all other dams for which locations were found. The database also contains the year in which dams were completed or began operation; information we exploit in our analysis to compare children born after the dams are completed to children born before in the same region. We filled in missing values for year of construction in the database to the best of our ability using updated ICOLD data (ICOLD, 2003) and internet searches. Of the 1,040 dams in the database for which geographical coordinates are available, we are able to obtain the year of completion or start of operations for 967.

The regional variation in dam construction is visible in Figure 2, which depicts African dam locations from our data as well as the continent broken down into level 6 river basins. The earliest constructed dam in the dataset was built in 1691, and the last in 2008.[1] The frequency of dams built annually in Africa from the year 1900 according to our dataset is shown in Figure 3.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in large-scale dam projects being commissioned across Africa. The major motivation behind the spurt of new dam construction is the continent-wide high demand for electricity. The amount of hydropower under construction in Africa increased by 53% from 2004 to 2006 (Wachter, 2007). Countries with a high hydropower generation capacity such as Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo have begun building dams of vast proportions to meet their own power needs, and also to export electricity to neighbouring countries.[2] Several of these projects have received substantial financial support from the World Bank and other development finance institutions. Many new large dams, such as the Gibe III in Ethiopia and the Merowe dam in Sudan, are also being financed by Chinese private firms and large banks (Economist, 2010; Hydroworld, 2010). The growing number of projects and the level of financial support from international sources shows a great deal of confidence in dams as an investment in the future of Africa, but the impact on welfare these new projects will have forms an important part of the return to this investment.

3 Empirical Strategy

In this section we discuss the household data we use for our analysis, and how we implement our estimations. We then outline the specifications and econometric procedures we use on the data, and discuss the results in the next section.

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[1] Six of these dams are still under construction or not operational. We use them in our analysis as dams present but not operational before children in connected river basins are born.

[2] The Grand Inga dam on the Congo river will cost approximately $80 billion to build, and is estimated to be capable of providing power to 500 million households on its own (World Bank, 2009). It is planned to generate twice the amount of power currently generated by the largest hydropower generating dam in the world; the Three Gorges dam in China.

3.1 Household and Infant Mortality Data

Our data on children and households comes from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) that is carried out across several countries in Africa at different points in time. Clusters of households are randomly selected across each country to participate in the survey, and all women aged 15-49 years are interviewed in each household. A detailed fertility history is collected from each interviewee along with information on maternal and child health indicators, child mortality outcomes, household members, personal background, and wealth indicators. For several of these surveys, the latitude and longitude of the location of each cluster of selected households is recorded, and can be accurately pinpointed within a ten kilometre radius. We use every wave of the DHS survey carried out in an African country for which this geographic data is available. This gives a sample of women and children from 32 waves of DHS surveys in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe whose geographic locations we can identify for our analysis. The clusters of women interviewed in the Cameroon DHS survey in 2004 are shown in Figure 4, along with the locations of dams in the country and the division of the terrain into level 6 river basins. The size of the entire pooled sample from all the surveys is 231,169 women and 912,080 children. The fraction of children born each year that die aged 0-12 months in the final pooled sample for birth cohorts born from 1960 onwards is shown in Figure 5.[3] There is a clear downward trend in the infant mortality rate over time, although some of this is driven by differing survey years across countries.

In Table 3 we also report the number of children of non-migrants that are exposed to at least one dam at birth, broken down by category of dam exposure and time period of the child's birth. Within-basin dams and farther downstream dams are by far the most prevalent forms of dam exposure at birth. There are however enough children born into each category of dam exposure, and enough variation within each category over birth cohorts, to carry out our analysis. The number of dams children are exposed to at birth within each category is reported in Table 4.

There is a concern that non-migrant women may differ systematically between regions with different kinds of dam exposure. For instance, only women without the wealth or

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[3] 70% of the 134,143 children who die aged five or below in our sample are 0-12 months old at the time of their death.

other means to migrate may remain in areas negatively affected by dams. This creates the possibility that these women also differ systematically in unobservable characteristics across regions with different kinds of dam coverage, and that our results are potentially driven by these unobservables. To see whether this is a problem for our analysis, we regress a dummy variable for whether the mother has completed primary school, mother's height in centimetres, and a dummy showing whether she belongs to the poorest two quintiles within her survey sample on dummy variables indicating whether she has been exposed to a within-basin dam, neighbouring upstream dam, upstream dam farther away, neighbouring downstream dam, or downstream dam farther away by the year she is interviewed. We also include in the specification a number of other maternal characteristics. The results are in Table 5. Being exposed to a dam in any of the five exposure categories does not seem to lead to systematically better-off or worse-off samples of non-migrant women due to differential migration. For instance women remaining behind in basins exposed to a neighbouring upstream dam are less likely to complete primary school, but on the hand appear to have much better health endowments proxied by height compared to women who are completely unconnected to dams by river flow. Importantly, there seem to be no significant differences between the fractions of non-migrant women in the poorest 40% of their survey sample exposed to a within-basin, neighbouring upstream, or farther upstream dam. The few significant differences we do pick up are therefore probably driven by regional variation rather than selective migration caused by dam coverage.

3.2 Empirical Strategy

There are two major issues intrinsic to dam construction and the resulting consequences that complicate the empirical investigation. The first is that river basins where dams are constructed are geographically different from those where they are not. As explained in Duflo and Pande (2007), dam operations require rivers flowing at different gradients depending on the purpose of the dam. According to the dam engineering literature, irrigation dams require a gentle river slope to create a long reservoir in proportion to the height of the dam and to allow the water to reach the irrigated area via gravity (Golze, 1977; Cech, 2003). If the river gradient is too steep the water flow will erode the canals that transport water to the command area. In contrast, hydroelectric dams require a steep river gradient so that fast-flowing water can power the electricity-generating turbines (Warnick, 1984; Cech, 2003). Therefore river basins with river gradient conditions and geography suitable for dam construction will most likely differ from other basins in agricultural conditions, average elevation, temperature, and other factors that influence regional infant mortality rates. There are also undoubtedly region-specific political elements that influence the negotiations, contracts, and agreements that determine where dams are going to be constructed. These elements in all probability are closely linked to economic factors at a more disaggregated level within each country, which determine both regional dam placement and infant mortality rates. An OLS regression of infant mortality rate or child survival probability on the number of dams exposed to will therefore lead to biased estimates.

We implement a DID estimation to deal with the above concern. Specifically we examine different levels of exposure to dams at birth, which is determined by the river basin where the child was born, the years dams were constructed, and the child's year of birth. The geographical factors that influence dam construction are nearly constant over time, and the concentration of dams in a river basin is a good indication of how effective the other influences behind dam placement are in the region. We can therefore consider children born in the same river basin to be subject to the same elements that determine selection into the different kinds of exposure to dams, and use the variation in dam construction over time as well as child birth cohorts in our sample to examine the impact of this exposure on these children based on how many dams were operating upstream, downstream, or in the same river basin in the year of their birth. The children's years of birth in the sample range from 1953 to 2008, covering more than 50 years. This period coincides very closely with the years when dams were constructed most rapidly across Africa, which was approximately 1950 to 1995. There is therefore a lot of variation in the intensity of children's exposure to dams that we can exploit for our analysis. Of course the validity of this procedure rests on the assumption that trends in infant mortality between basins would not differ in the absence of dam construction. We ensure this assumption is not violated in our robustness checks by showing that there is no significant correlation between child mortality during ages 0-12 months and the number of dams built 60 months or more after these children are born. This check also alleviates concerns that dams are placed endogenously with respect to infant mortality rates across basins.

The second serious concern for our empirical estimations is that households often migrate in large numbers due to the effects of dams on the geography in their place of residence. This migration, whether forced or voluntary, can lead to biased estimates of dam impacts if households select themselves endogenously into regions that benefit from dams based on unobservable characteristics. To deal with this econometric concern, we carry out estimations only for children of non-migrant women as discussed in the introduction. However this sample also makes our estimations prone to different sources of selection bias. We therefore again argue that the lack of significant correlation between infant mortality and dams built long after children are past infancy shows that systematic differences between households across types of dam coverage are not driving the results. We identify non-migrant mothers using the information on the number of years each woman interviewed has lived in her current place of residence. If the answer to the question is "always", the woman is classified as a non-migrant. This process gives us a sample of 103,211 non-migrant women and 415,548 children born to non-migrant mothers.

Our outcome of interest is whether a child dies aged 0-12 months. The central econometric approach we use to find any impact of dams on this outcome is a linear probability model (LPM). The LPM is attractive due to its simplicity, but the linear specification may lead to probability estimates lying outside the unit interval. We perform checks to make sure that enough of the predicted probabilities from the model lie between 0 and 1. We can also correct for the individual-specific heteroscedasticity built into the error structure of the LPM by using robust standard errors. To illustrate our DID procedure using the LPM specification, consider the following regression:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 UDAMS^B_{ij} + \beta_2 WDAMS^B_{ij} + \beta_3 DDAMS^B_{ij} + \gamma X_{ij} + \theta_j + t_i + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variable y_{ij} is a dummy variable taking the value 1 if child i born in river drainage basin j died when aged 12 months or younger. Regressors $UDAMS^B_{ij}$, $WDAMS^B_{ij}$, and $DDAMS^B_{ij}$ represent respectively the total number of upstream, within-basin, and downstream dams built before the child's birth year t_i for basin j. X_{ij} is a vector of other regressors that affect child survival probability. θ_j is a basin fixed effect that we include in the specification to control for unobserved time-invariant regional factors that influence infant mortality. t_i is a birth year fixed effect for child i to control for time trends in infant mortality probabilities. ϵ_{ij} is an idiosyncratic error term. If we believed that an OLS regression would yield unbiased results, then the estimated beta coefficients from this regression would capture the effects of upstream, downstream, and within-basin dams on infant mortality probability. However, as discussed earlier, neighbouring upstream and neighbouring downstream dams could have differential effects from upstream and downstream dams farther away. We could therefore expand (1) to the following,

$$\begin{aligned} y_{ij} \;=\; \alpha \;&+\; \beta_1\, UDAMS^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_2\, WDAMS^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_3\, DDAMS^{B}_{ij} \\ &+\; \beta_4\, UDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_5\, DDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij} \\ &+\; \gamma\, X_{ij} \;+\; \theta_j \;+ t_i \;+\; \epsilon_{ij} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where we now include $UDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij}$ and $DDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij}$, which represent respectively the number of neighbouring upstream and neighbouring downstream dams from basin j that were built before the birth year of child i. Including these dam counts alongside the total number of upstream and downstream dams built by year t_i will allows us to separately identify any differential effects they may have from dams that are further away. However, estimating (1) and (2) using OLS would lead to biased results due to omitted regional variables that determine the number of dams built in any river basin, and also household level unobservables that determine both migration status and infant mortality risk. To deal with regional omitted variables that determine"selection" into differing intensities of dam exposure, we further alter (2) to the following,

$$\begin{aligned} y_{ij} \;=\; \alpha \;&+\; \beta_1\, UDAMS^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_2\, WDAMS^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_3\, DDAMS^{B}_{ij} \\ &+\; \beta_4\, UDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij} \;+\; \beta_5\, DDAMS\_NBR^{B}_{ij} \\ &+\; \delta_1\, UDAMS_j \;+\; \delta_2\, WDAMS_j \;+\; \delta_3\, DDAMS_j \\ &+\; \delta_4\, UDAMS\_NBR_j \;+\; \delta_5\, DDAMS\_NBR_j \\ &+\; \gamma\, X_{ij} \;+\; \theta_j \;+ t_i \;+\; \epsilon_{ij} \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

so that the specification now includes the total number of dams *ever built* in basin j, in all the upstream and downstream basins along the river from basin j, and also separately the total dams ever built in the neighbouring upstream and neighbouring downstream basins from basin j. We represent them the same way as we do the number of dams in built in these basins before the child's birth year t_i, but we remove the superscript 'B' and subscript 'i' to indicate that they are the total counts of dams ever built in these basins.[4] These dam counts capture the effects of the various influences behind dam construction in the basins where they are built, therefore conditioning on the time-invariant factors behind "selection"

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[4] Explicitly $UDAMS_j$, $WDAMS_j$, and $DDAMS_j$ respectively denote the total number of upstream, within-basin, and downstream dams from basin j that have been constructed. $UDAMS\_NBR_j$ and $DDAMS\_NBR_j$ separately represent the current total number of dams in neighbouring upstream and downstream basins respectively.

into the different kinds of dam exposure all children born in basin j are subject to. The actual intensity of exposure for each child in the first 12 months of life however, is determined by the number of dams in each category of basin already operating at the time of the child's birth. These dam counts are the ones we began with in (1) and (2), but in (3) these regressors will identify their differential impact from total dams ever built on mortality probability for child i. The specification in (3) is therefore our baseline specification, and the beta coefficients on the superscripted dam-count variables are our treatment effects of interest. To link these coefficients to the previous discussion on Figure 1b, we show in Table 2 each dam count from the specification paired with its corresponding null hypothesis from Table 1. The basin linkages by river flow and the resulting dam counts are calculated at the level of the level 6 drainage basin, the smallest level of regional basin disaggregation.

As the specification in (3) implicity reports the average impact of each dam as identical, we also look for non-linear results by breaking up the number of dams at birth by type of dam coverage into incremental categories. Specifically we use dummy variables for each different number of dams children are exposed to, as well as simple binary treatment indicators for the presence of dams at birth in each category of exposure. Treatment indicators assume dam effects appear immediately after the first dam is built, which is fairly realistic considering the mean area of each basin represents a quadrant with sides of only about 65 km^2. We include several other independent variables in the vector X_{ij} that influence infant survival probability, such as mother's education and age, birth order, the number of previously born living children and living sons in the household, the number of previously born children who have died, a child gender indicator, dummy variables indicating a child of a multiple birth, and several household wealth indicator variables such as the kind of toilet in the house, and whether the household owns durable assets such as a television, car, refrigerator, or motorcycle.[5]

We do not control for region-specific time trends in our specification, and it is possible that some of these determine both dam counts and infant survival probabilities. There are also still concerns arising from the fact that the error term contains unobservables that determine the household's decision to migrate, and are also potentially correlated with dam counts and infant mortality risk. There are also child-specific heterogenous unobserved factors that are part of the error term to consider. We therefore check carefully for any

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[5] Each mother in our sample is treated as a single household.

signs of omitted variable bias in our robustness checks. In all our specifications we include country fixed effects as well as river basin fixed effects. We also carry out estimations with heteroscedasticity-robust errors, which we cluster according to the size of the river basin fixed effects.

4 Results

In this section we present the results from our estimations. The baseline results from estimating (3) on children of non-migrants are reported in Table 6. In Panel A we show the results from including dam counts at birth as continuous regressors. Column (1) shows the coefficient estimates for the treatment dam counts from the specification with level 5 basin fixed effects. The Panel A estimates indicate that each neighbouring upstream dam at the time of a child's birth increases the child's probability of survival past age 12 months by 3.95%, which is significant at the 5% level. On the other hand, each upstream dam operating in a basin farther upstream increases the probability of the child dying by age 12 months by 2.24%. This coefficient estimate is significant at the 1% level. Inserting level-6 fixed effects absorbs the impact of the total dams ever built in upstream and downstream level 6 basins, and in the same level 6 basin. However these fixed effects control more locally for regional time invariant factors that might influence dam coverage as well infant mortality. The estimates from column (2) show increased magnitude of some impacts compared to column (1), with neighbouring upstream dams reducing infant mortality probability by 4.60% and upstream dams farther away increasing infant mortality probability by 2.36% on average. Downstream dams, neighbouring or farther away, have no apparent impact on infant mortality.

In Panel B we report results from including indicators for the presence of any number of dams at birth in each category of exposure. The pattern of results remains the same for neighbouring and farther away upstream dams, with the former reducing infant mortality and the latter having a detrimental effect as in Panel A. Neighbouring and farther away downstream dams continue to have no impact. However unlike in Panel A, we find a strong increasing effect of 2.39-2.57% from the presence of within-basin dams on infant mortality. This once-and-for-all effect indicates that within-basin dams most likely have non-linear impacts in infant mortality as their number increases.

In Table 7 we report results from breaking the dam counts at birth into categories. The omitted comparison category is zero dams for each type of exposure. Upon inserting dummy variables for the number of within-basin dams children are exposed to, we find that these dams increase infant mortality steadily from 2.27% to more than 10% as the number of dams increases.[6] This indicates significant detriments from increased disease incidence and reduced agricultural productivity in the vicinity of dams that outweigh their benefits from irrigation and increased economic activity during their construction. Estimating the impact of each neighbouring upstream dam and each upstream dam farther away using dummy variables yields qualitatively the same results as Table 6. Nearly every additional neighbouring upstream dam reduces infant mortality, and almost every additional upstream dam farther away increases infant mortality. It appears that neighbouring upstream dams provide significant command area benefits and access to economic opportunities that outweigh the negative effect of reduced water levels due to these dams' presence, and therefore significantly reduce infant mortality. The large exacerbating impact of dams farther upstream on infant mortality is what we would expect in the African context as the river flow downstream is restricted by these dams without any compensating command area benefits.[7]

4.1 Agriculture and Floodplains

We now attempt to isolate the effect of dams on infant mortality through their impact on agriculture, and additionally through their impact on floodplain cultivation. To do this we identify which river basins in our data are used for cropland cultivation using the FAO and NASA spatial dataset on global cropland occurrence published in 2007. While the data does not show changes in cropland area over time, we go by the assertion of Strobl and Strobl (2010) who show that cropland areas in African countries have not changed during 1981-2000 and argue that these areas are unlikely to have altered significantly between birth cohorts. We then interact indicators for dam presence at birth with an indicator for whether the child was born in a river basin with cropland cultivation, to identify differential dam impacts in regions where agriculture is likely to form an important part of the local economy.

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[6] We only show coefficients for the first 10 dams children are exposed to in the same basin. There are up to 41 such dams at maximum exposure, and the coefficients for each additional dam is positive and significant at the 5% level. The results are available from the author upon request.

[7] The results from the same regression with level 6 fixed effects show the same qualitative findings, and are available from the author upon request.

To further identify differential impacts in floodplain areas, we use spatial data on annual river runoff levels from the global river runoff dataset released by the Global Runoff Data Centre (GRDC) in collaboration with the University of New Hampshire in 2002. River runoff is defined as river water that travels across the land surface without being absorbed into the soil, the height and geographic extent of which is determined by the speed and volume of river water discharge as well as rainfall. The dataset provides annual mean river runoff data across Africa using river discharge data and climate water balance models since before 1975. We use this data to identify regions in Africa that are likely to be seasonally inundated and allow the practice of floodplain agriculture, as river runoff is the major mechanism through which both water and fertile silts are deposited in these areas. We specifically identify regions with annual runoff of more than 250 milimetres per year, and search for differential dam impacts on infant mortality in these areas using three-way interaction terms of dam presence indicators, an indicator for birth in a river basin with cropland, and an indicator for birth in a region with high annual river runoff. The spatial cropland and river runoff datasets are depicted in Figure 6.[8]

The results for children born in basins with cropland are presented in Panel A of Table 8. The presence of any within-basin dams at birth increases infant mortality by 1.15%, capturing the detrimental impact of these dams on agriculture in their vicinity as in Duflo and Pande (2007) and Strobl and Strobl (2010). There are however no differential effects of neighbouring upstream or farther upstream dams in basins with cropland, compared to basins without. The results however change dramatically in Panel B upon further interacting the dam-cropland interaction terms with the indicator for birth in an area with high river runoff. We find no differential effects of within-basin dams across floodplain and non-floodplain regions with cropland, suggesting that the harmful effect of these dams is equally spread between floodplain cultivation and other types of agriculture. However there is a strong detrimental impact of both neighbouring upstream and farther upstream dams on infant mortality in floodplain regions with cropland, as compared to non-floodplain cropland areas. The presence of a neighbouring upstream dam at birth increases infant mortality by 4.04%, while the presence of a dam farther upstream increases infant mortality by an even larger 7.57%. This shows that dams cause much harm to floodplain cultivation and wetland ecosystems downriver beyond their command area, even for households in the neighbouring

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[8] The results are robust to different definitions of areas with high runoff. The 250 mm runoff level was chosen as it represents a reasonably high level of inundation in the context of Africa.

downstream basin. The harmful effect of the presence upstream dams farther away is three times as large as the effect in Table 6, showing the additional harm to households caused by these dams in floodplain areas.

4.2 Malaria

We investigate the impact of dams on malaria using MARA/ARMA project data on the duration of the annual malaria transmission season across Africa. Dam reservoirs fill up during the rainy season, which is also when malarial transmission is at its highest. The breeding ground for mosquitoes provided by the reservoirs is therefore likely to increase malaria in their vicinity in areas where the annual duration of the transmission season, determined by both rainfall and temperature, is already lengthy. We should also not expect to find any effects of neighbouring upstream or farther upstream dams on malaria, as households are not close enough to the reservoirs of these dams to be affected. Hence establishing that malaria increases in the vicinity of dams but not downriver from them would go some distance in validating all our results. The spatial variation in length of annual transmission duration, along with the locations of our surveyed households, is shown in Figure 7.

We interact our dam coverage variables with indicators for whether children are born in areas where the length of the transmission season is 4-6 months, or 7-12 months of the year. The omitted category for comparison is 0-3 months duration. The results are shown in Table 9. In Panel A we report results from the interaction terms using the continuous number of dams in each category. We find no significant effects of within-basin dams in areas of intermediate transmission duration. However infant mortality increases by 1.53-1.57% for each within-basin dam in areas with the longest annual duration of malaria transmission. Importantly, we find no differential effects of neighbouring upstream or farther upstream dams between regions of varying transmission intensity. This greatly reduces concerns that we our results are driven by regionally omitted variables, such as the effects of living in the tropics. Panel B shows results from interaction terms using indicators for the presence of dams at birth in each category. The coefficient estimates become stronger for within-basin dams in these specifications, showing that they increase infant mortality in regions with intermediate malaria transmission duration by 1.18-1.23%, and by 3.15-3.33% in areas with the longest transmission period. Again, we find no impacts of neighbouring upstream or farther upstream dams, which is encouraging for the results.

4.3 Robustness Checks

The results we have shown thus far are large, and at face value they point to the importance of dams in determining child welfare levels. The pattern of results we find for basins with cropland, areas with high river runoff, and by varying duration of annual malaria transmission season provide considerable evidence against the presence of omitted variable bias. However we still want to be sure that our results are actually reflecting the effects of dam operations, and not any other household-level omitted variables that determine migration status as well as infant mortality rates. To verify whether there is such bias in our results, we implement additional econometric procedures on both our estimation samples.

Our first robustness check is to estimate whether there any impacts on infant mortality risk of dams built in each category of exposure 5 years or more after the child is born. There should be no significant effects of dams built well past the child's first year of life, unless our results are driven by systematic differences in maternal unobservables correlated with dam coverage, by differing time trends in infant mortality between dammed and non-dammed basins, or by endogenous placement of dams with respect to infant mortality. If household differences are systematically correlated with different types of dam coverage, they should be correlated with the number of dams present both before and after a child is born. We should therefore find significant coefficients on dams built 5 years after the child is born, in the same direction as those we found for dams built before the child is born, if what we actually capturing in our results is systematic household differences due to selective non-migration. We should also find similar coefficients if we are capturing differential regional trends across basins that correlate with dam construction. Finally, if dams are endogenously placed with respect to infant mortality, our results are capturing reverse causality which should also be reflected in similar coefficients on dams built after the child's infancy. We insert the number of dams built when the child is aged 5 years or more in each category of exposure into specification (3), and report their estimated coefficients in Table 10. The notation for the dam counts is the same as for those representing dam counts at birth, except we change the superscript from B to A to indicate that these counts are for dams built after the child is born. In both columns (1) and (2) of Table 10, the coefficients on within-basin dams, neighbouring upstream dams, and upstream dams farther away are insignificant. This is encouraging for the validity of the impacts of these dams we find in our main results.

The second robustness check we carry out is to redefine the dam counts at the level of the level 4 river drainage basin. By changing the unit of land area in our analysis from the level 6 to the level 4 basin, we effectively ignore the river network linkages between the smaller, more closely connected areas and focus instead on linkages between much larger areas. It is equivalent, for example, to defining a child in country A as downstream from a dam if the dam is in country B which lies upstream, and ignoring all the dams that are actually in the city upstream from the child's own city. We therefore effectively create "pseudo-treatment" dam counts, as by greatly expanding the area of the basin that defines river linkages we ignore much stronger local linkages and markedly weaken any possible dam impacts from one basin to another. We should therefore find either much smaller effects or zero effects of any dam counts by level 4 basin. Finding reduced impacts would indicate that we are capturing dam effects rather than bias from unobservables correlated with our dam counts, as we use the same regional fixed effects and the potential contaminating unobservable factors remain the same. We re-estimate specification (3) using the new dam counts and report the results in Tables 11. The results show statistically significant impacts of upstream dams farther away and neighbouring upstream dams, but the effects are ten to twenty times smaller that those of the corresponding level 6 dam counts in Table 6. When we additionally disaggregate the effects of level 4 basin dam counts by whether children are born in floodplain regions, we find no effects of any of the dam count interactions with the floodplain indicator.[9] This is additional evidence in favour of our results.

While river basin fixed effects control for time invariant basin features, there is still much geographical variation within each basin that determines both dam placement and also potentially infant mortality. To reduce the possibility of bias from omitted geographic features within each basin that are correlated with dam placement and infant mortality, we attempt to control explicitly for such features in a final robustness check. We use the geographical features in each level 6 drainage basin to generate a propensity score for the probability of the basin containing a dam. As discussed earlier, irrigation dams rely on gravity from moderate river gradients to disperse water to the command area, whereas hydroelectric dams need steep river gradients to power electricity generation. We should then expect more dams in areas with steeper river gradients, and much fewer dams in areas with flat river gradients. To exploit this empirically we use the GTOP030 dataset on global elevations combined with the FAO geographic dataset on African rivers to calculate river lengths in each level 6 river basin

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[9] These results are available from the author upon request.

within four gradient categories, which are low slope (0-1.5%), medium slope (1.5-3%), steep slope (3-6%), and very steep slope (6% or more). We then estimate a Poisson regression with the number of dams in each level 6 basin as the outcome variable, and these geographical variables as regressors.[10] We include river lengths and areas in the first three slope categories explicitly, and then the river length and area totals within the basin to capture the effects of the omitted category of very steep gradient. The results are reported in Table 12. The coefficients show that river lengths of low gradient have a strong negative impact on the number of dams in the basin as expected, and river lengths with very steep gradient have a positive impact.[11]

We use the coefficients from Table 12 to predict the number of dams in each basin, which creates a geographic index of suitability for dam construction within the basin. The index values are shown in Figure 8. We generate a propensity score for the presence of a dam in each basin using one-to-one matching methods and including linear and higher order terms of the geographic index, river lengths, and also country fixed effects as predictors.[12] The propensity scores are shown in Figure 9. Given that Africa is considered under-dammed and there are various factors besides geography that determine dam placement, Figure 9 shows that our procedure performs quite well in predicting where dams are located. We include this propensity score for each basin as a regressor in our specification to condition on geography directly related to dam placement and potential impacts within each basin. We show the results from estimating (3) with the propensity score included in column (3) of Table 13, where columns (1) and (2) show the original results from Table 6. The estimates show that the coefficients do not change qualitatively across the columns after including the propensity score, which is again encouraging for our findings. We repeat the same check for our results differentiated by floodplain, and find no changes in these either.

5 Discussion

Our results show large dam impacts on infant mortality among children born to non-migrants. We find that neighbouring upstream dams reduce infant mortality by 3.84-4.60%. Upstream

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[10] We use a procedure that corrects for potential over-dispersion and relies only on the conditional mean assumption. We also run the regression only in basins where rivers are present so as to not skew the results.

[11] steeper gradients most likely produce a positive impact on dams due to the presence of multi-purpose dams in the continent that also generate hydroelectricity.

[12] We control for every country that has overlapping areas with the level 6 river drainage basins.

dams further upriver on the other hand increase infant mortality by 2.18-2.36% among these children. This is because households are able to benefit from the irrigation services and increased economic opportunities from the dam in the neighbouring upstream basin, but downriver beyond the command areas of these dams households suffer due to declining water levels that harm floodplain recession agriculture and the wetland ecosystem. This is further captured by the fact that the harmful impact of dams farther upstream triples to 7.57% for children born in floodplain regions with cropland. Within-basin dams appear to increase infant mortality by at least 2.27%, because agricultural productivity declines and disease incidence increase in basins where dams are built. The harmful effect increases steadily to more than 10% as the number of within-basin dams increases. The detrimental impact of within-basin dams through reduced agricultural productivity is reflected by the 1.15% increase in infant mortality among children exposed to one or more these dams who are born in cropland areas, compared to those born in basins without cropland. The increase in infant mortality from increased malaria incidence due to within-basin dams is 1.18-1.23% in areas where the transmission season is 4-6 months per year and 3.13-3.33% where it is 7-12 months out of the year, compared to regions where it is 0-3 months annually.

Based on our estimates in Table 7, neighbouring upstream dams are responsible for saving 19.10% of the 4,725 children that survived infancy after exposure to these dams in our sample. On the other hand, within-basin and farther upstream dams together are responsible for 14.15% of the 8,079 children in our sample who die during infancy after exposure to these dams. Placed in this context our estimated dam impacts are large, and have significant policy implications for dam construction in regions where migration may not be possible to offset any harmful impacts. These implications need to be taken into consideration given the surge in dam building taking place across Africa. Gains in neighbouring downstream regions may be offset by large detrimental impacts further downstream across international borders or even within the same country. A good example of this is the Gibe III dam being built on the Omo river in Ethiopia, which is planned to significantly increase hydroelectric capacity for both domestic consumption and export to neighbouring Kenya. However the impact on the river will possibly be to end its annual inundation cycle, which will harmfully affect Ethiopian tribes such as the Mursi living downstream from the dam, as well as reduce the height of Lake Turkana across the border in Kenya with potential consequences to the surrounding population. While we cannot be certain of the benefits new large dams being planned will bring, their impacts on river flow, agricultural productivity, and malaria have been documented previously. These impacts are ultimately absorbed by entire communities whose livelihoods are altered as a result, either for the better or for the worse. Infant mortality is a new dimension of welfare within which to measure dam impacts, and we feel our results reflect the importance of considering this dimension as part of the dam building process.

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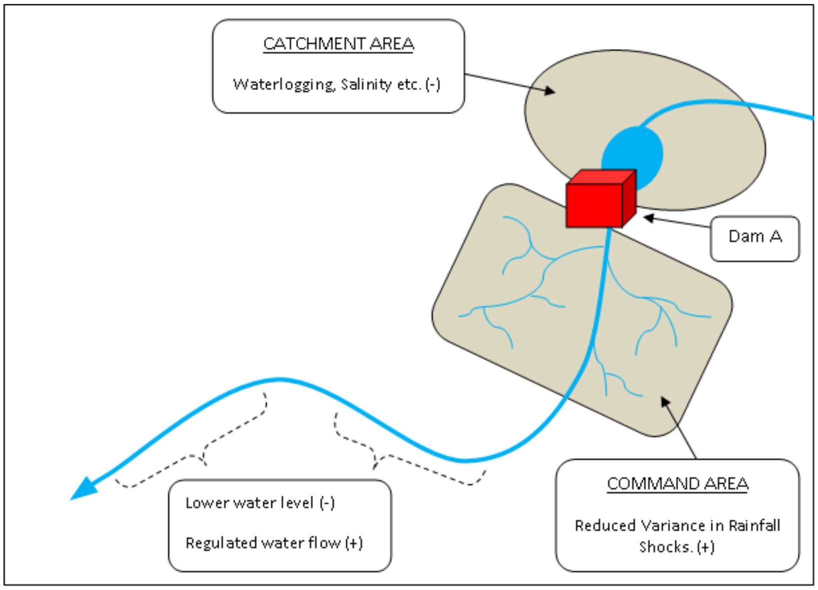
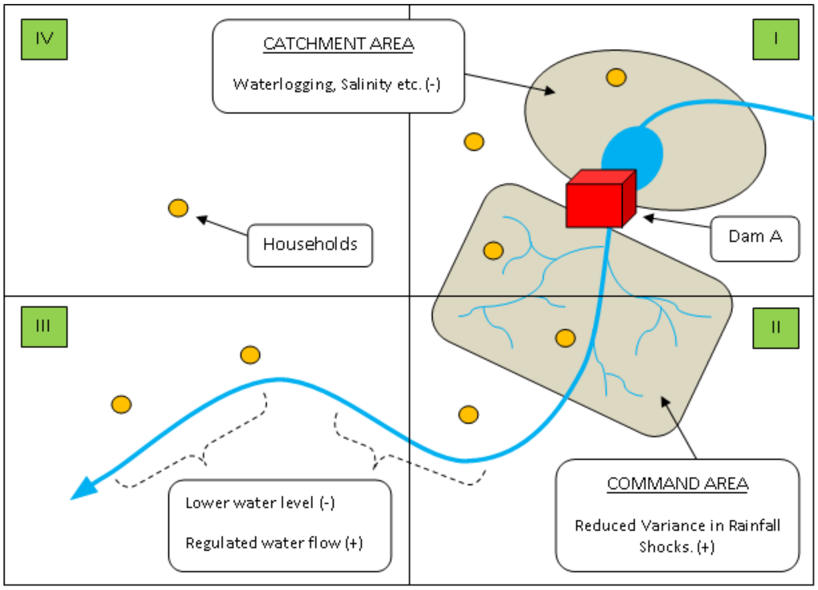
Figure 1: Dams Impacts by Region



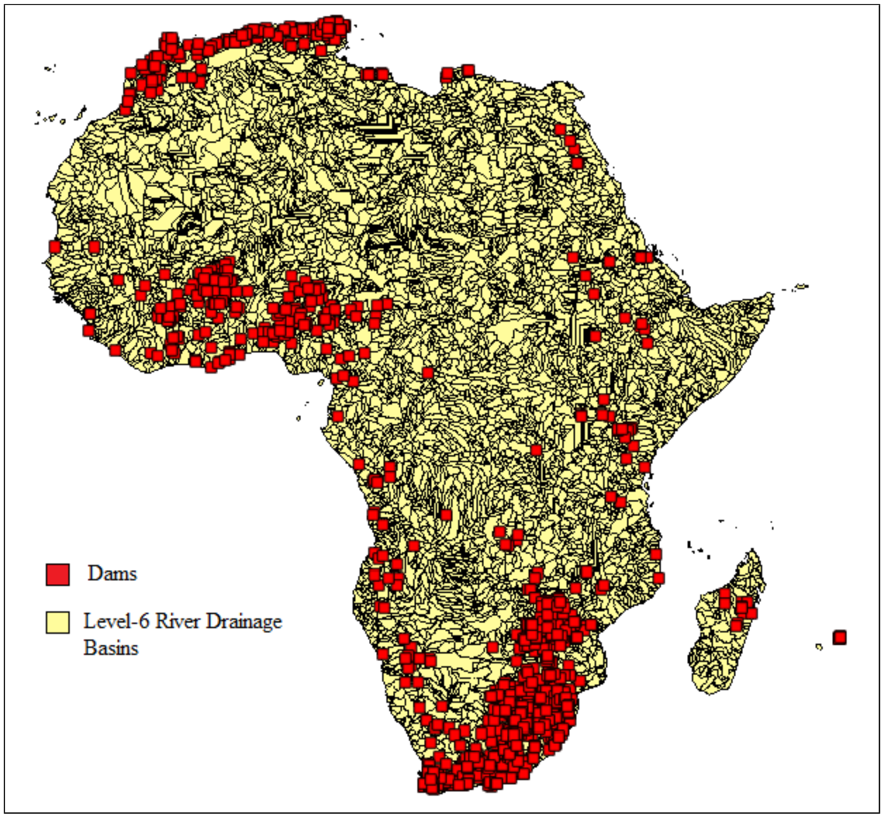
(a) Dam Catchment and Command Areas



(b) Households and Quadrants

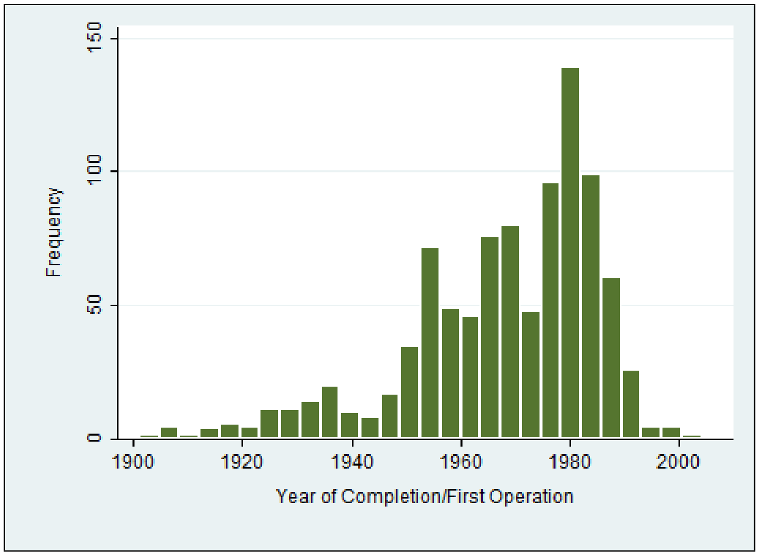
Notes: The figure is based on a diagram in Strobl and Strobl (2010). Plus signs indicate benefits from dams, and negative signs indicate detriments. Quadrants are theoretical representations of river basins, which are our geographical unit of analysis.

Figure 2: Dams and River Drainage Basins in Africa



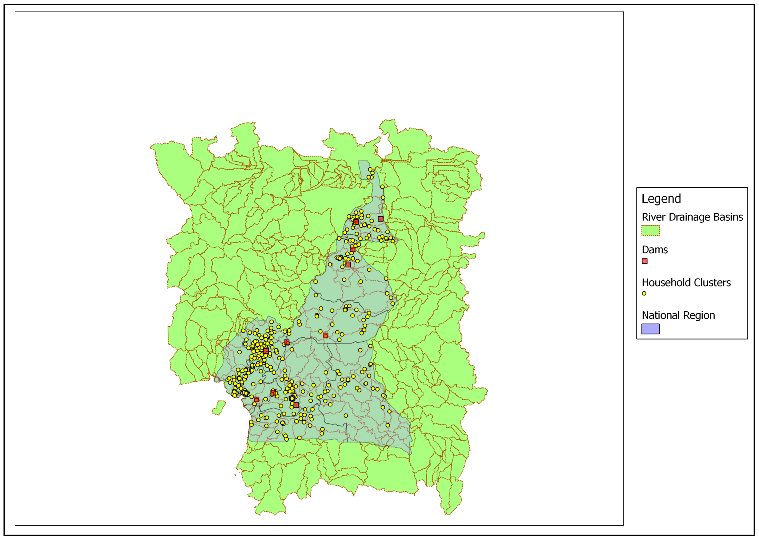
Notes: The river drainage basins depicted are from the HYDRO1K dataset provided by the US Geological Survey. The locations of the dams are taken from the geo-referenced database on African dams created by the Aquastat programme at the FAO.

Figure 3: Dams Completed Annually in Africa (1900-2008)



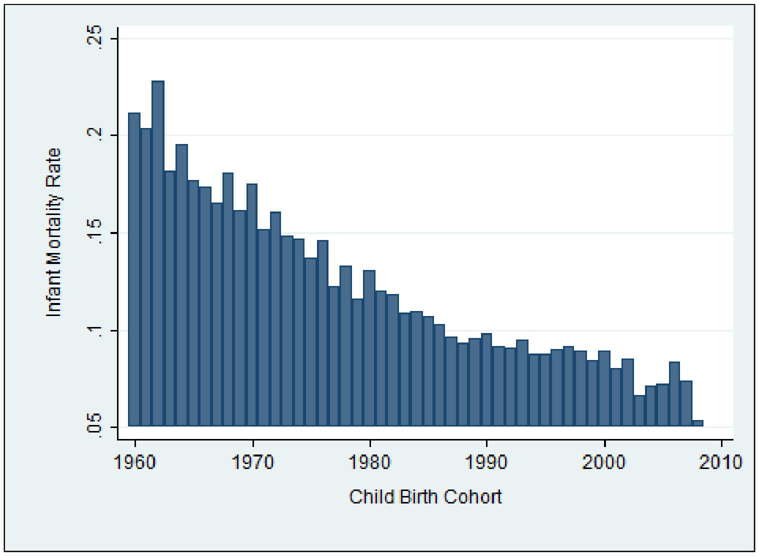
Notes: The year of completion/start of operation for each dam is taken from the FAO geo-referenced database on African dams, ICOLD data, or our own internet research.

Figure 4: Cameroon DHS 2004 - Households, Dams, and River Basins



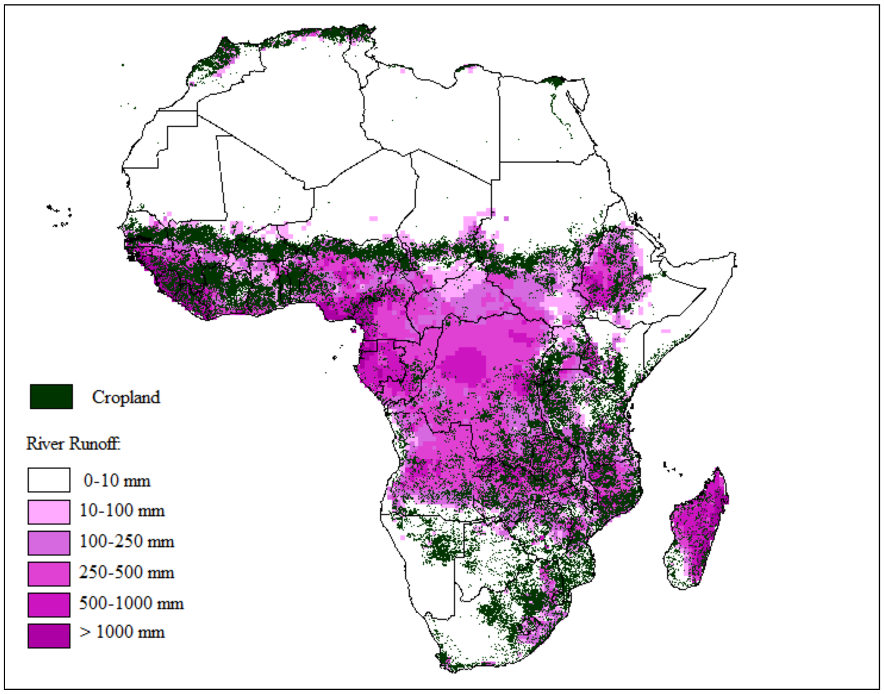
Notes: The household clusters are sampled for the Measure DHS Survey in Cameroon in 2004. The cluster locations are accurate within a ten kilometre radius.

Figure 5: Annual Infant Mortality Rate



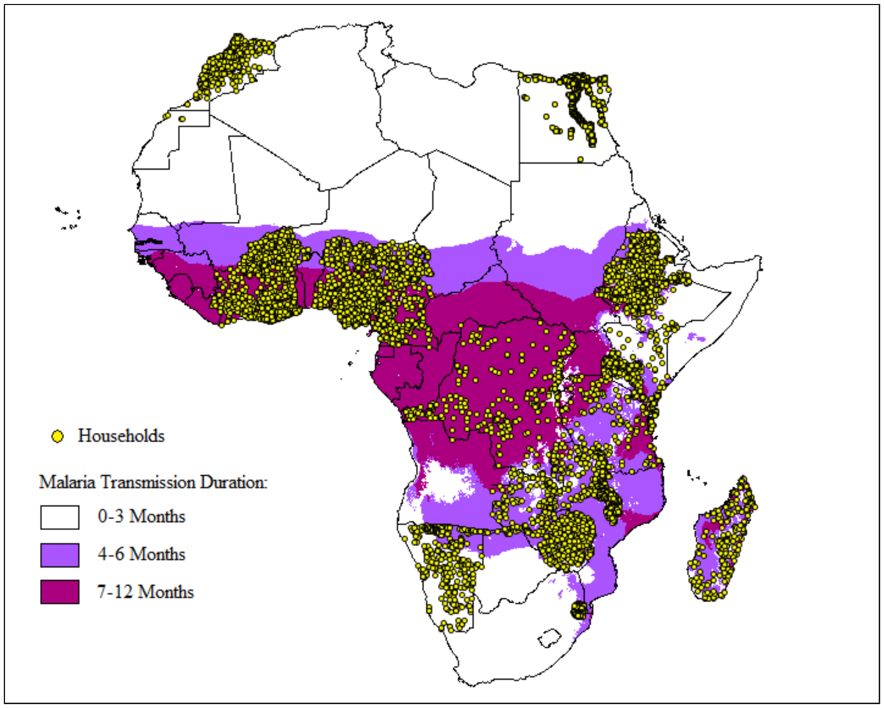
Notes: Infant mortality rates are calculated from the pooled final dataset used in our estimations, using several DHS survey waves from 17 countries in Africa as reported in Table **??**.

Figure 6: Cropland and River Runoff in Africa



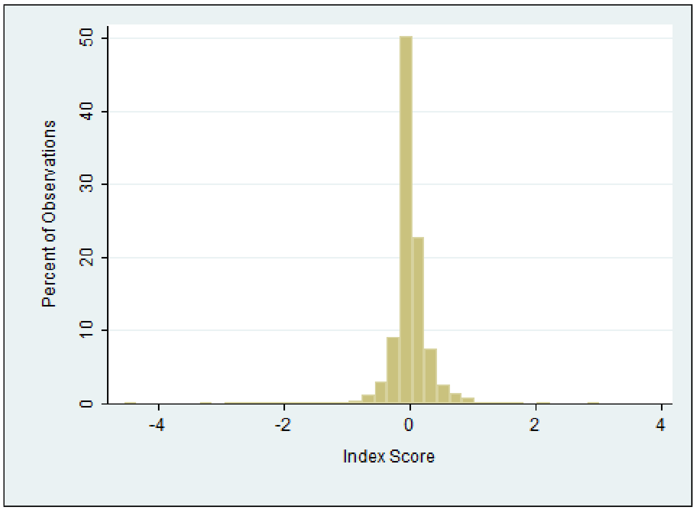
Notes: Cropland data is from the FAO spatial database on cropland occurrence created in conjunction with NASA in 2006. The river runoff dataset is from the Global Runoff Data Centre (GRDC) in collaboration with University of New Hampshire.

Figure 7: Households and Malaria Transmission in Africa



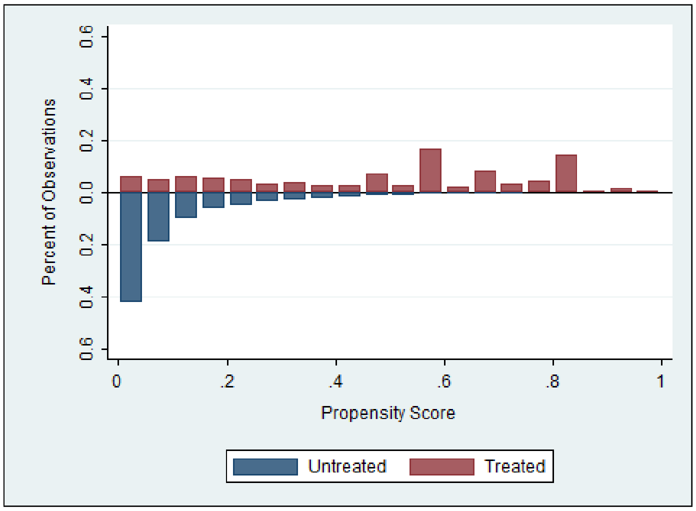
Notes: Households are from the 32 DHS surveys we use in for our analysis. Malaria transmission season data is from the MARA/ARMA project.

Figure 8: Geographic Index of Suitability for Dams



Notes: The river drainage basins used as observations are from the HYDRO1K dataset provided by the US Geological Survey. The elevations used to calculate land and river gradients are from the GTO030 global elevations dataset. The river lengths in each basin are calculated using the FAO shapefile of African rivers.

Figure 9: Propensity Score - Dam in Level-6 Basin



Notes: The propensity scores are calculated based on the geographic index of dam suitability, river lengths in drainage basins, and basin areas within each African country. The river drainage basins used as observations are from the HYDRO1K dataset provided by the US Geological Survey.

Table 1: Dam Impacts by Relative Location to Household

Dam Location	Quadrant	Benefits	Detriments	Net Effect
Within Same Basin	I	Command area irrigation; Increased economic activity around dam site.	Salinisation; Waterlogging; Waterborne and sexually transmitted diseases; Disruption of inundation cycle.	Ambiguous
Neighbouring Upstream Basin	II	Command area irrigation; Increased economic activity around dam site.	Declining water flow from upriver.	Ambiguous
Farther Upstream Basin	III	Regulated water flow.	Declining water flow from upriver.	Ambiguous
Neighbouring Downstream Basin	-	Unsure.	Unsure.	Not discussed
Farther Downstream Basin	-	Unsure.	Unsure.	Not discussed

Notes: The dam impacts discussed are not exhaustive. They include those that are relevant for agricultural productivity via changes to the river flow cycle, and the impact of dam command area services and catchment areas. The position of the river basin where the dam is located is defined in the first column relative to the river basin where the household in question resides. The second column shows the quadrant of household residence in Figures 1b and **??** the null hypothesis refers to, assuming Dams A and B are the treatment dams in the exposure category being considered.

Table 2: Dam Impacts by Regressor

Dam Location	Quadrant	Regressor	Net Effect
Within Same Basin	I	$WDAMS^B$	Ambiguous
Neighbouring Upstream Basin	II	$UDAMS\_NBR^B$	Ambiguous
Farther Upstream Basin	III	$UDAMS^B$	Ambiguous
Neighbouring Downstream Basin	-	$DDAMS\_NBR^B$	Not discussed
Farther Downstream Basin	-	$DDAMS^B$	Not discussed

Notes: position of the river basin where the dam is located is defined in the first column relative to the river basin where the household in question resides. The second column shows the quadrant of household residence in Figure 1b the null hypothesis refers to, assuming Dams A and B are the treatment dams in the exposure category being considered. The third column shows the corresponding regressor from specification (3)

Table 3: Dam Coverage by Time Period of Birth

	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-08	Total
Children Born in Period	8,015	54,250	143,193	166,855	67,076	439,389
Infant Deaths in Period	1,484	7,994	15,986	15,095	4,999	45,558
One Within-Basin Dam	909	8,651	27,785	31,856	10,740	79,942
One Neighbouring Upstream Dam	16	483	1,734	2,306	792	5,331
One Farther Upstream Dam	13	163	737	975	411	2,299
One Farther Downstream Dam	349	2,712	7,260	8,653	2,542	21,516
One Neighbouring Downstream Dam	40	402	1,212	2,110	686	4,450

Notes: Figures are for children born to non-migrant mothers. The sample of children is from 32 waves of DHS surveys across 17 African countries. Data on dams is from the geo-referenced database on African dams. The total refers to the number of children with at least one dam in the corresponding category of dam exposure at the time of their birth.

Table 4: Dam Counts By Exposure Category

	Dams Present at Birth		
	Mean	Min	Max
Within-Basin	1.07	0	67
Neighbouring Upstream	0.02	0	4
Farther Upstream	0.02	0	6
Neighbouring Downstream	0.04	0	69
Farther Downstream	0.21	0	11

Notes: Figures are for children born to non-migrant mothers used in the analysis after removing outliers. Data on dams is from the geo-referenced database on African dams.

Table 5: Mother Characteristics and Dam Coverage in Interview Year

	Primary School	Height (cm)	Poorest 40%
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Within-Basin Dam	0.009	-0.444	-0.025
	(0.058)	(0.755)	(0.067)
Neighbouring Upstream Dam	-0.243*	7.378**	0.191
	(0.120)	(1.987)	(0.137)
Farther Upstream Dam	-0.028	0.327	0.012
	(0.0575)	(0.766)	(0.063)
Neighbouring Downstream Dam	-0.033	-1.543	0.238**
	(0.056)	(1.343)	(0.066)
Farther Downstream Dam	-0.128**	-0.515	-0.003
	(0.046)	(0.534)	(0.066)
Observations	66,310	66,310	66,310
Level-5 Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basins	1,060	1,060	1,060

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Reported coefficients are for indicator variables taking the value 1 if there is a dam present in the relevant category of exposure in the year the mother is interviewed, and 0 otherwise. Additional regressors include current age, number of births, a rural residence indicator, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. ** Significant at 1% ; * Significant at 5%

Table 6: Infant Mortality and Level-6 Dams

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months	
Panel A	(1)	(2)
$WDAMS^B$	0.0006	0.0007
	(0.0006)	(0.0008)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$	-0.0395**	-0.0460**
	(0.0174)	(0.0222)
$UDAMS^B$	0.0224***	0.0236***
	(0.0069)	(0.0074)
$DDAMS\_NBR^B$	0.0035	0.0015
	(0.0062)	(0.0055)
$DDAMS^B$	-0.0016	-0.0001
	(0.0048)	(0.0045)
Panel B	(1)	(2)
$WDAMS^B$ *Present*	0.0239***	0.0257***
	(0.0089)	(0.0092)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$ *Present*	-0.1900**	-0.2080**
	(0.0873)	(0.0964)
$UDAMS^B$ *Present*	0.1670*	0.1580*
	(0.0856)	(0.0921)
$DDAMS\_NBR^B$ *Present*	0.0766	0.0863
	(0.0523)	(0.0529)
$DDAMS^B$ *Present*	-0.0421	-0.0481
	(0.0425)	(0.0450)
Observations	263,918	263,918
Level-5 Fixed Effects	Yes	No
Level-6 Fixed Effects	No	Yes
Basins	1,060	1,151

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Panel A reports results from including dam counts as continuous regressors. Panel B shows estimated impacts of the presence of any dams at birth in each category of exposure. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. *** Significant at 1% ; ** Significant at 5% ; * Significant at 10%.

Table 7: Infant Mortality and Dams

$WDAMS^B$		$UDAMS\_NBR^B$		$UDAMS^B$	
Count	Coeff.	Count	Coeff.	Count	Coeff.
1	0.0227*	1	-0.1654**	1	0.0773**
2	0.0420**	2	-0.2138**	2	0.1287**
3	0.0398*	3	-0.2088	3	0.0800
4	0.0568**	4	-0.3913**	4	0.1640**
5	0.0779**			5	0.1409**
6	0.0728*			6	0.1620**
7	0.0431			7	0.1514
8	0.0981**				
9	0.0938**				
10	0.101**				

Estimations are with level-5 basin fixed effects. Omitted category is zero dams for each type of exposure. Coefficients for indicators for 11-41 within-basin dams not shown, but all are positive and significant at the 5% level. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. *** 1% Significance ; ** 5% Significance ; * 10% Significance.

Table 8: Infant Mortality, Level-6 Dams, and Cropland

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months
Panel A	(1)
$WDAMS^B$ *Present* * *Cropland*	0.1150*** (0.0406)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$ *Present* * *Cropland*	-0.1090 (0.1200)
$UDAMS^B$ *Present* * *Cropland*	0.0621 (0.1320)
Panel B	(1)
$WDAMS^B$ *Present* * *Cropland* *$High\ Runoff$	-0.0148 (0.0227)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$ *Present* * *Cropland* *$High\ Runoff$	0.0404*** (0.0135)
$UDAMS^B$ *Present* * *Cropland* *$High\ Runoff$	0.0757*** (0.0248)
Observations	263,918
Level-6 Fixed Effects	Yes
Basins	1,151

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Basins with cropland identified using the FAO and NASA dataset on cropland occurrence. Areas with high runoff are defined as those with runoff of 250 mm or more per year according to the GRDC/UNH dataset on global river runoff. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. *** Significant at 1% ; ** Significant at 5% ; * Significant at 10%.

Table 9: Infant Mortality, Level-6 Dams, and Malaria

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months	
Panel A	(1)	(2)
$WDAMS^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0022	0.0021
	(0.0014)	(0.0013)
$WDAMS^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	0.0157***	0.0153***
	(0.0048)	(0.0046)
$UDAMS\_NBR^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0117	0.0185
	(0.0104)	(0.0361)
$UDAMS\_NBR^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	0.00306	0.0019
	(0.0158)	(0.0619)
$UDAMS^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0002	-0.0007
	(0.0012)	(0.0010)
$UDAMS^{B}\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	0.0003	-0.0105
	(0.0085)	(0.0147)
Panel B	(1)	(2)
$WDAMS^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0118**	0.0123*
	(0.0059)	(0.0064)
$WDAMS^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	0.0333***	0.0315***
	(0.0114)	(0.0114)
$UDAMS\_NBR^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0248	0.0183
	(0.0237)	(0.0598)
$UDAMS\_NBR^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	-0.0525	-0.1320
	(0.0692)	(0.1140)
$UDAMS^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 4-6\ mths$	0.0016	0.0046
	(0.0099)	(0.0065)
$UDAMS^{B}\ Present\ ^{*}Malaria\ 7-12\ mths$	0.0593	0.0382
	(0.0561)	(0.0731)
Observations	263,918	263,918
Level-5 Fixed Effects	Yes	No
Level-6 Fixed Effects	No	Yes
Basins	1,060	1,151

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Omitted malaria transmission duration category is 0-3 months per year. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. *** Significant at 1% ; ** Significant at 5% ; * Significant at 10%.

Table 10: Infant Mortality and Level-6 Dams After Birth

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months	
	Level-5 FE	Level-6 FE
	(1)	(2)
$WDAMS^A$	-0.0044 (0.0039)	-0.0048 (0.0039)
$UDAMS\_NBR^A$	0.0157 (0.0748)	-0.0059 (0.0559)
$UDAMS^A$	0.0387 (0.0284)	0.0098 (0.0499)
$DDAMS\_NBR^A$	0.0025 (0.0126)	-0.0019 (0.0139)
$DDAMS^A$	0.0010 (0.0023)	0.0035* (0.0017)
Observations	263,871	263,871
Level-5 Fixed Effects	Yes	No
Level-6 Fixed Effects	No	Yes
Basins	1,060	1,150

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Dam counts are numbers of dams built in each category more than 5 years after the child is born. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. ** Significant at 1% ; * Significant at 5%

Table 11: Infant Mortality and Level-4 Dams

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months
	(1)
$WDAMS^B$	0.0004 (0.0006)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$	-0.0025* (0.0011)
$UDAMS^B$	0.0023* (0.0009)
$DDAMS\_NBR^B$	0.0021 (0.0033)
$DDAMS^B$	-0.0003 (0.0026)
Observations	263,871
Level-6 Fixed Effects	Yes
Level-6 Basins	1,151

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. ** Significant at 1% ; * Significant at 5%.

Table 12: Dams and River Gradients in Level-6 Basin

	Number of Dams in Basin
River Length – Low Slope	-1.879* (0.851)
River Length – Medium Slope	-0.518 (1.846)
River Length – Steep Slope	1.837 (1.573)
Total River Length	0.963* (0.385)
Area in Basin – Low Slope	-87.026** (20.291)
Area in Basin – Medium Slope	-97.582* (38.751)
Area in Basin – Steep Slope	-140.054 (95.756)
Total Area in Basin	89.772** (18.954)
Observations	5,746
Level-1 Fixed Effects	Yes
Level-1 Basins	10

Notes: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. River lengths are in thousands of kilometres, and areas are in thousand kilometres square. ** Significant at 1% ; * Significant at 5%.

Table 13: Infant Mortality, Level-6 Dams, and P-Score

	Child Died Aged 0-12 Months		
	Level-5 FE	Level-6 FE	P-Score
	(1)	(2)	(3)
$WDAMS^B$	0.0006 (0.0006)	0.0007 (0.0008)	0.0005 (0.0006)
$UDAMS\_NBR^B$	-0.0395* (0.0174)	-0.0460* (0.0222)	-0.0384* (0.0169)
$UDAMS^B$	0.0224** (0.0069)	0.0236** (0.0074)	0.0218** (0.0072)
$DDAMS\_NBR^B$	0.0035 (0.0062)	0.0015 (0.0055)	0.0036 (0.0063)
$DDAMS^B$	-0.0016 (0.0048)	-0.0001 (0.0045)	-0.0016 (0.0048)
Observations	263,918	263,918	258,223
Level-5 Fixed Effects	Yes	No	Yes
Level-6 Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No
Basins	1,060	1,151	1,025

Notes: Robust clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. Additional regressors include mother's educational attainment, mother's current age, mother's height, a child gender indicator, child of multiple birth indicators, birth order and sibling composition variables, birth year fixed effects, and wealth indicator variables. ** Significant at 1% ; * Significant at 5%