

LAKE VICTORIA FISHERIES ORGANIZATION



FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT WITH REFERENCE TO LAKE VICTORIA

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Fisheries Development and Management with Reference to Lake Victoria

1- Introduction

Lake Victoria with an area of 68,000 km² is shared by the three East African Community (EAC) Partner States Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It is the second largest freshwater lake in the World with a booming freshwater fisheries. The lake is socio-economically very important as it provides fish as food, water for industrial and domestic use, irrigation, transport linking the countries, income, employment to over 3 million people who depend on it directly or indirectly. Fisheries from the lake contributes about 3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Partner States. The Lake is a very important source of fish for export to earn foreign exchange. The Lake produces over 500 metric tonnes of fish annually with a beach value of US\$600 million and US\$ 250 million forex earnings.

The fisheries of the lake has transformed from a multi-species fishery dominated by the cichlids haplochromines in the seventies to a fishery dominated by Nile perch, Nile tilapia and *Rastrinebora argentea* (mukene, dagaa, omena, kapenta or ndagala). These species form the main commodities for fishery and fishery products trade in national, regional and international markets. The fisheries management and development policies of Partner States emphasise sustainable management and utilisation of the fisheries to improve the living conditions of the people, contribute to economic growth and reduce poverty.

2- The main challenges/constraints

The main challenges/problems facing sustainable development and management of the fisheries resources is how to balance between the needs of the growing population around the lake and the fish processing industry, their desires and the health of the entire ecosystem of the lake. The key challenges/problems are:

- Inadequate policies and legal framework;
- Poor condition of the fisher community who earn money everyday but lack a savings and credit culture;
- Inadequate statistical data collection, storage, and dissemination machinery;
- Limited community involvement in fisheries management;
- Weak enforcement of fisheries legislation;
- Inadequate funding of fisheries management and development activities;
- Limited scientific and management information;

- Poor agricultural practices in the basin which lead to accepted soil erosion and siltation in the lake;
- Pollution from point and non point sources especially from industries, municipal and domestic wastes which lead to deteriorating water quality;
- Declining fish catches;
- Increasing fishing pressure;
- High incidences of diseases among fisher communities mainly HIV/AIDS, malaria, bilhazia. HIV/AIDS may kill the industry as it is reducing the number of active fishermen.

3- Formation of Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization

In order to sustainably manage the fish resources the Partner States established the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization through a Convention signed in 1994. The Organization is an Institution of the East African Community whose main objective is to foster cooperation among the Partner States by harmonising national management measures, developing and adopting conservation and management measures to ensure sustainable exploitation and utilisation of the resources in the lake.

The supreme body of Organization is the Council of Ministers responsible for fisheries in the Partner States. It gives policy guidance and makes conservation and management decision for implementation by the Partner States.

The other organs of the Organization are the Policy Steering Committee (Permanent Secretaries); the Executive Committee (Directors of Fisheries Management and Research); the Management Committee, the Scientific Committee and the Permanent Secretariat with offices in Jinja, Uganda.

The Organization has established a number of thematic area Working Groups which operate at national and Regional level. The main task of the working groups is to prepare status reports, Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines that are harmonised regionally and approved by the Council of Ministers for field use.

The Council of Ministers in an effort to promote alternative sources of fish and income approved a programme on Aquaculture Research and Development in the lake basin. The Working group on this program has prepared a status report on aquaculture and developed manuals for (i) fry production for tilapia (ii) fry production for cat fish, (iii) tilapia culture (iv) catfish culture, feed production and pond management. FAO under a TCP Project is assisting to develop a Strategy and Action Plan to develop aquaculture in East Africa.

The Organization collaborates with other Institutions dealing with Environment, water, land use, Research, training, the private sector, the Fish Processors and Exporters Associations, Non Governmental Organizations and Intergovernmental Organizations working around the lake.

The management of the fisheries at the grass root level is being strengthened through promoting community participation (co-management) by formation of Beach Management Units (BMUs) in all the Partner States around the lake. Co-management provides for broadening of participation of different stakeholders in the management of the resources as it involves the sharing of the roles and responsibilities between the Government, resource users, civil society institutions and private sector stakeholders. The BMUs are institutions at the beach level with legal empowerment through which fishing communities participate in fisheries management and development. Currently there are a total of 1079 BMU (Tanzania 450, Uganda 349 and Kenya 280).

4- Main source of Funding for Regional Projects

Currently fisheries management around the lake is funded by local governments, central Government, private sector (Fish Processors), Non governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Intergovernmental Organization (IGOs). The main donor/financial agencies are the European Commission which is supporting the Implementation of a Fisheries Management Plan Project for Lake Victoria, GEF/World Bank, NORAD, SIDA, USAID, ADB, FAO and IUCN.

5- Main Regional Projects on the Lake

1- Lake Victoria Environment Management Project (LVEMP)

The Lake Victoria Environment Management Project (LVEMP) was implemented from 1997 to 2002 with funding from GEF/World Bank and extended to 2004. The main objective was to introduce environmentally and socially sustainable economic development in the East African Community Partner States. The main objectives were to:

- a. Maximize the sustainable benefits to riparian communities through using resources within the basin to generate food, employment and income, supply safe water and sustain a disease free environment.
- b. Conserve biodiversity and genetic resources for the benefit of the riparian and global community.

The project components covered Fisheries Management, Fisheries Research, Industrial and Municipal Waste Management, Land Use

Management, Wetlands Management, Integrated Soil and Water conservation, Lake Water Quality Monitoring, Community participation and Capacity building. Presently, there is planning for a new phase which will commence in 2007. The project was very successful and a second phase is proposed. The second phase focuses on (i) Applied research (ii) Strengthening of national and regional management framework of the shared lake resources, and (iii) Sustainable economic growth and development in the lake basin.

2- Implementation of a Fisheries Management Plan Project for Lake Victoria

The Implementation of a Fisheries Management Project for Lake Victoria was developed to implement a Fisheries Management Plan for Lake Victoria which was developed based on results of Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project and was adopted by the Council of Ministers and is in compliance to implementing the strategic vision from 1999 to 2015. The project is being funded by the European Commission to the tune of €29.90 million. The main objective of the project is to contribute to sustainable economic growth, resource use and development in the Lake Victoria basin. The assistance is in line with the European Commission policy in terms of providing assistance to reduce poverty and stimulate economic development in the East African Community Partner States. The project runs from 1 April, 2003 to 31 August, 2008.

The main components of the project fall under the following Key Result Areas:

- Implementation of the Fisheries Management Plan effectively coordinated through strengthening institutions, harmonizing procedures, policies, legislation and institution linkages;
- Abilities of communities to co-manage the fisheries strengthened through establishing and strengthening Beach Management Units by building their capacity;
- Fisheries Infrastructure improved through procurement of vehicles, patrol boats and research vessels, improvement of social facilities, landing sites;
- Sustainable monitoring, control and surveillance and Resource monitoring and Social-economic monitoring established. This involves resources monitoring;
- Surveys, capacity building and operational support of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) activities;

- LVFO Secretariat strengthened as a center of excellence for Lake Victoria Fisheries information and databases. This involves training of staff in LVFO institutions, designing, construction and equipping of LVFO headquarters and developing sustainable funding options for LVFO activities.

The implementation of project activities is proceeding satisfactorily.

- 3- IUCN/LVFO Socio-economics of the Nile perch Fishery project was concluded in 2005. This project identified the main sources of conflicts in fishing communities and assisted greatly in resolving conflicts in cross-border fishing and fish trade.
- 4- Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)/FAO/COMESA project on production of value added products is constraint by uncertainties in the flow funds. It has assisted in securing a processing consultant who worked with processing plants to develop value added samples from Nile perch. These samples will be made available to potential customers in trade fairs in Europe in October, 2006. The project is also working on improving the processing of Dagaa for human consumption.
- 5- FAO TCP/RAF/31012 (A) project on Aquaculture in East Africa. This project is to assist the Partner States to prepare a Strategy and Action plan to develop aquaculture in East Africa. This is in line with the directive of the Council of Ministers for the LVFO Secretariat to promote aquaculture. The project has a funding of US \$360,000 and will run for two years starting July, 2006. Other aquaculture activities are under the Lake Victoria Initiative (VicRes) funded by SIDA/SAREC, under the Lake Victoria Development Programme of the East African Community (EAC). LVFO member countries are participating in VicRes projects namely:
 - Designing and developing systems and guidelines for rural aquaculture;
 - The breeding of labeo, catfish and tilapia;
 - Revival of aquaculture for food security and poverty alleviation among the rural communities along Lake Victoria basin; and
 - Improving farm yields and income through integrated aquaculture in the Lake Victoria basin.

6- Recommended Priority Action Areas

The sustainability of the fisheries resources of Lake Victoria and environment will in future depend on maximising wise utilisation of financial resources available from different funding agencies and embracing the precautionary approach. Areas of priority intervention include but not limited to:-

- 1- Strengthening cooperation and collaboration between/among the different agencies supporting activities on the lake by creating Partnerships. Donors could consider participating in a basket Partnership fund;
- 2- Embracing Integrated Planning and ecosystem management approach that ensures all key sectors and stakeholders participate in the planning and implementing process.-
- 3- Establishing a forum for exchange of information, technology and expertise;
- 4- Capacity building for all stakeholders at different levels;
- 5- Developing small, medium and commercial investment opportunities around the lake and basin;
- 6- Recognising and enhancing the participation of the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders in developing appropriate policies and legal framework for responsive fisheries management and development;
- 7- Improving infrastructure and other community social facilities like provision of portable water, health facilities schools;
- 8- Promoting a savings and credit culture among fisher communities;
- 9- Promoting alternative sources of employment like developing aquaculture
- 10- in the basin to reduce the fishing pressure now experienced on the lake;
- 11- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, bilhazia and other communicable diseases which are critical to development and the productive health of fisher communities;
- 12- Maintaining good governance and the existing political commitment and good will of the Partner States.