



Water Diplomacy in Lake Victoria.

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• **General overview of water diplomacy and sustainability in Lake Victoria**

The East African region is recently facing conflicts which is attributed to scarcity of natural resources, water being the main one. Lake Victoria is the largest freshwater Lake in the region, and it is being shared majorly by three countries: Kenya 6%, Uganda 43% and Tanzania 51%. However, other neighbouring countries benefit from this Lake for instance Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Egypt, DRC and Sudan due to the Nile outlet from the Lake. The Lake provides fishery activities, water for human consumption, recreational activities, hydroelectric power, irrigation, waste disposal. Circa 30 million people benefit from the Lake. Tension is arising due to utilization not only of the water source *per se* but also of the rich food resources (fish) shared by Kenya and Uganda. Furthermore, the Nile outlet and the overall region is currently caught up in conflicts. This tension has led to five among these countries to sign a New Nile treaty although it led to protest by some of the member countries.

The Lake Victoria basin, which is densely populated, supports impoverished people that depends on the lake either directly or indirectly to earn a living and put food on the table. Furthermore, not only economic activities have emerged but also contradictions and disputes due to the various national and natural borders. Migingo is among the three close Islands in the Eastern waters of the Lake few kilometres from the Kenyan mainland port in the western Migori county, and approximately 200km from Ugandan mainland port. In 2001, Migingo Island earned fishermen 3 or 4 times daily catch as compared to what they were catching before. This reputation as a rich fishing ground led to over population, turning the island to a micro slum. The offshore of this island is a weigh station and encampment for commercial export of Nile perch fish. It has attracted pirates, smugglers and protests on sovereignty of the island.

In 2000, climate changes due to hydrological cycles of the Lake basin has led to susceptible water table fluctuations alarming the inadequacy of water in the Lake. At the same time, the Lake rich fish concentration has drastically diminished over the past years. This can also be ascribed to overpopulation (associated with a rapid rise in population growth) and other interlinking human activities around the lake basin (Thiery et al., 2016).

Nearly 80% of replenishment of Lake Victoria comes from rainfall. Studies show that in the past the Lake has dried up three times and there are high chances that this could happen again due to climate change (hence linked to variations in temperatures

and rainfalls) and human activities. The annual rainfalls in the lake must continue to be at least 75% otherwise the Lake is set to dry up. Moreover, human activities contribute a lot to the pollution of the lake. Industrial waste, discharge of affluent, fertilizers and sewage wastes increase water nutrients salts which results to eutrophication.

There is commercialization of the Lake's fishing industry which is affecting the surrounding community that depends on the lake. There are claims by fishermen that they work hard but the catch is less, the amount of fish has been ruined by overfishing by big factories that commercialize fish. Women are the most affected, since large factories have displaced their normal work on the land where they normally smoke, dry and fry fish. At the same time women make up about half of the fisheries workforce, but they are much less involved in community-based fisheries management than men. This is also due to prevailing gendered norms and relations.

The low diversity of fish raises concerns about future sustainability of the Lake. Despite the fact that a law was implemented to limit slot size for Nile perch as a framework for future fisheries, still nothing has changed.

The lake is the most dangerous Migration has been observed among indigenous people. People migrate seasonally across the lake following rainfall distribution pattern. However, local fishermen find it difficult to participate in the long-distance fishing due to family demands and lack of enough resources. Additionally, migration of Nile perch has led to challenges among the management of the fisheries on the Lake. Which has contributed to conflicts over land and fish catch in the lake basin.

waterways in the world, each year 4000-5000 people lose their lives on the lake due to navigation accidents (CNN, 2013) these deaths affect over 40000 dependents (WMO, 2014). In 2016, the lake received funding so as to improve the safety and fishing activities and to identify networks for maritime communication (Nunan, 2014).

• *Similarities of Lake Chad and Lake Victoria*

Lake Chad and Lake Victoria have a lot of similarities when it comes to water sustainability and diplomacy. Both Lakes are partaken by three or more countries: some countries taking a greater percentage of space than others. It feeds over 30 million individuals. The said lakes have both, at least once, experience a dryer periods and they are now at danger of drying up again in the coming future. Both lakes' sustainability is also affected by human activities and changes in the climate since both lakes depend on rainfalls.

Increase in human population is the main challenge attributed to overfishing and minimization of fish in both lakes.

In both cases, media channels are less involved in creating awareness to the indigenous communities about the dangers they are causing to the lake and how its consequences will affect them or rather it is affecting them either directly or indirectly.

The most vulnerable group affected are women in both Lakes, since most have lost their spouses in the lake and at the same time, they depend so much on fishing activities and most of them are unemployed.

Conflicts is seen in the lake basins of both lakes due to inadequate resources and overpopulation. At the same time migration is rampant in both Lakes since fishermen, migrate to regions or countries that are rich in fish. This has also contributed tension in the boarder countries.

In both lakes, there are governing rules that are implemented concerning overfishing which see affecting is affecting fishing activities of the indigenous communities.

• ***Media involvement in the issues affecting the Lake Victoria***

According to various studies, media does not play a huge role in creating awareness and the welfare around the Lake. Studies show that it's only a single radio case broadcasted in 2005 called "Victoria Voice series". However, it did not cover much on environmental degradation of the lake neither did it cover the problems of the community. It rather focuses mostly on the economic survival of the big industries and wealthy and powerful elite people in the region. For instance, the media should play a fundamental role in analysing climate variability and change which is the main course of deaths in the lake due to uncertainty in weather. Participatory frame of modern (scientific) and traditional methods should be integrated to help the indigenous communities.

Media should be a tool to educate the community on the threat of overfishing, it's consequences and the necessary changes that should be used that will definitely affect them.

Comments:

This paper presents a first brushstroke draft of the Lake Victoria water diplomacy and some of the issues connected to this water source. The article also links Lake Victoria with the Conference topics surrounding Lake Chad. The paper tries its best to describe the delicate challenges arising in the region, highlighting the multiple actors involved. Thus, it could be used as a very general introduction on the topic. However, it is clear to the reader that this paper lacks a clear and articulated supporting bibliography, which limits the depth of the arguments and mostly the possibility to further explore the ideas presented.