



## **The Importance of Capture Fisheries in Food Security in Uganda**

**Food Security:** Communities surrounding Lake Victoria do not have secure access to fish as a source of protein and nutrition. “The unrestricted fish trade has contributed to this food insecurity, and has also reduced the population’s nutritional status by taking substantial quantities of fish to global markets that would otherwise have been available to local consumers.” (Moi University) Demographic studies show that the population surrounding Lake Victoria are expected to grow at an annual rate of 3.8%. With this increased population growth and commoditizing of fisheries, food insecurity will only be perpetuated. Facilitating proper management of subsistence and artisanal fisheries will alleviate the growing demand for nutritious food.

**Economic Role of Fisheries:** The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates 700,000 Ugandans are employed through fisheries-related livelihoods. Approximately 150,000 people are directly employed by the industry while 550,000 earn incomes through processing, trading and other related services. “Fishing has always played an important economic role in the modern state of Uganda, and has assumed an even greater profile with the advent of the Lake Victoria Nile perch fishery. By some estimates, annual exports, primarily of Lake Victoria products, amount to as much as US\$ 41 million.” (FAO) According to the Uganda’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, fisheries represent 6% of the Country’s GDP.

**Job Insecurity:** “The local people... have progressively been driven out of fish production, pricing, marketing and processing activities, with fish factories and their agents tightly controlling the activities. Employment changes in traditional fish trading and processing sectors for Nile perch and its products, which was previously the activity of women, are not integrated in the marketing chain for fish processing and fishmeal.” (Moi University)

**Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper:** Uganda’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) lists the fisheries sector as an important area of growth and cites the need to establish beach management units to ensure sustainable management at the community level. The PRSP also recognizes that fisheries communities are among the most affected by poverty in Uganda. Fisheries management is crucial to development in Uganda; the PRSP emphasizes the need for well managed and properly protected waterways to stop biodiversity degradation while sustaining fisheries.

**Harmful Practices:** Experts argue Lake Victoria is the most important source of inland fishery in Africa, producing an annual catch of 500,000 metric tons. Aside from the value of the lake’s fishery, “the lake moderates local climate, serves as a means of transport, and a source of human food... Environmental degradation, exotic introductions and increased fishing pressure have led to a decline in fish catches, and changes in the lake’s biodiversity, threatening the sustenance of the lake fishery upon which millions depend for their livelihoods.” (Moi University)

**The Need for Proper Fisheries Management:** The commercialization of Lake Victoria’s fishery coupled with rapid population growth has perpetuated food insecurity for local communities. These trends are reversible. With the introduction of best practices, capacity building at the local level, and rationalizing the trade of fish and fish products, secured access to protein-rich food is attainable. Promoting biodiversity restoration and conservation will help stabilize the current destructive practices and help sustain responsible fisheries management. Through the support and guidance of USAID, both food security and ecological growth for Lake Victoria and the surrounding communities is feasible.

**Other Donor Projects:** World Bank - Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project in Uganda



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## Resources

UN Food and Agriculture Organization Uganda Fisheries Overview:  
[http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP\\_UG/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_UG/en)

*An Overview of the Current Status of Lake Victoria Fishery: Opportunities, Challenges and Management Strategies*  
by M. Njiru, et al. Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, Moi University, 2008.

*Uganda: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* found at:  
[http://www.danidadevforum.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/A2C5FD05-60AC-43FF-973C-71B293A87C78/0/WS\\_PovertyReductionStrategy.pdf](http://www.danidadevforum.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/A2C5FD05-60AC-43FF-973C-71B293A87C78/0/WS_PovertyReductionStrategy.pdf)

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