

Consultation with District Administrators and Local Fisheries Management Institutions

Report Prepared for Project on the Impact of Globalization on Fish Utilization and Marketing Systems in Uganda

Department of Fisheries Resources

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1. Introduction

In August 2002, the Government of Uganda, under the Department of Fisheries Resources signed a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] with Mike Dillon Associated of UK to implement various activities related to the impact of globalization on fish utilization and marketing systems in Uganda. The project was designed to examine the impact of fish trade liberalization and then fish export, to the a number of sections of fishing communities and the entire fish production, marketing and processing chain. The project was also to examine the impact of fish export trade on the rest of the economic sectors especially those that are closely associated with the fishing industry.

As an approach, the project was to use historical information that exist in Fisheries Department archives and also to generate supportive information to strengthen decisions on government policy to improve Uganda's fish utilization and marketing. Initial focused studies were made to understand the Uganda's current policy environment in terms of policy governance on fish trade and the underlying policy and institutional frameworks for management of the fisheries sector. The framework policies in place to guide the development and planning for the fisheries sector include Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) plus the Decentralization and Privatization policies.

The above government policies are key tools for planning, budgeting and implementation of government programs where the fisheries sector has greatly benefited. The policies are also key in guiding public and private sector investments where fisheries trade and marketing issues have largely benefited. Details of the relevance of these framework policies an their implications on poverty, fish trade liberalization and marketing are contained in a policy paper written for this project [see Nyeko and Keizire, 2003]³

This report by Nyeko and Keizire, is a synthesis of issues raised during a filed work undertaken to generate views and ideas from the decentralized structures managing fisheries in Uganda. The issues raised were guided by questions related to fish trade liberalization and its implications on poverty levels of fishing communities and districts budgeting systems. The questions were also to ensure that the globalization project objectives were appreciated by local governments and how the district planning systems could benefit from this fish trade and globalization study. This filed work was undertaken between 25th of October and 15th of November 2003 in the districts along Lake Victoria and some districts along Kyoga.

The report does not present the details stories of discussions with local governments but only presents issues raised by local governments in terms of

³ Policies on Poverty and the Fisheries Sector in Uganda: The Current Policy Trends and Options for Fishing Communities

project objectives and also the implications of Uganda's fish accessing international markets to fisherman's income. The report is arranged in 5 sections. Following this introduction section, the objectives of the fieldwork are presented. The later part outlines the anticipated outputs from the filed study. The following sections of the report present a synthesis of issues discussed during the visits.

2. Objectives of the Field Work

The objectives of filed work and discussions with local government officials and communities was initially to ensure participation by all groups and collectiveness in building fish trade models and generating consensus and acceptability by local authorities on the project.

The other key objective was to encourage local fisheries management institutions to engage in-group formation and cooperate with other fisheries management groups. The objective of this group formation and its relevancy to the project was that in communities where groups have been formed, certain management objectives have been effectively met. Some of these management objectives include understanding of fish trade rules and market behaviors of his was made on the premise that Uganda is creating fisheries management organizations. This was seen to be one of the key components of community group formation.

The issue of groups was made in recognition that Uganda has already started group formation at landing sites called Beach Management Units (BMUs). Picking examples where such groups have been formed, [*such as L. Kyoga, L. Edward and L. George*], plus where they are to be formed, there is evidence of cooperation to form bigger associations. Such bigger associations can engage in fish marketing and trade for purposes reducing the price margins and also for purposes of enhancing value addition and thereby increase in revenue throughout fish production, marketing and processing chain.

3. Expected Output(s)

The expected outputs of the field visits were based on the objectives of the visits and also the objectives of the globalization project.

4. Field Work

As indicated in the introduction section of this report, visits were done on the districts of Mukono, Rakai, Busia, and Kalangala Islands. All these districts are on L. Victoria and some selected landing sites on Lake Kyoga.

4.1 Discussions with District Officials

As a matter of approach, common meetings in districts were organized between the respective Chief Administrative Officers, the District Production Coordinators, the District Fisheries Staff, plus other staff in the district involved in the management of natural resource based enterprises. The method used in gathering views in the district was to present the general overview of the fisheries sector and the recent trends in the international arena regarding fish trade. The initial issues to be emphasized were those of enhancing fish production and then work on trade and market issues later. The issues of production were seen to be primary to issues of trade. After understanding and appreciating that fish production is primary to fish trade, the district officials were introduced to the globalization and fish trade project. In regards to enhancing fish production in the districts, the general view of many officials in the districts is that there is general appreciation of recent fisheries management measures that are aimed at increasing the level of fish catches on Lake Victoria.

The district officials met in Rakai district, for example, indicated that fisheries management in the past had not focused on using a strong Monitoring Control and Surveillance. There was a strong conviction amongst local fisheries managers that fish was a renewable natural resource and therefore without management of controlling stocks, fish would automatically reproduce, feed itself and thereafter multiply. In almost all the areas visited, district officials appreciated that capturing immature fish destroys the reproductive pattern of juvenile fish and therefore affect total fish population in the lakes. The immature fish is captured before it lays eggs, millions of young fish is destroyed and this affects the reproductive structure of the total fish biomass in the lake. A continuous practice of this activity is likely to lead into total fish stock collapse.

In regard to the impact of globalization on fish utilization and marketing systems, district officials observed that the Nile Perch fishery which (to a large extent) has penetrated the fish export market has got positive things and also negative things to fish dependent communities and the country as whole.

On the positive side, the district officials generally agree that fish export trade has increased the fisherman income through increased fish prices. The comparisons were made based on the period before increase in the fish exports. As regards to fish catches statistics at the districts indicate that before advent of fish export trade or say fish export boom, fish catches were high and the number of fishermen were relatively fewer than the number to-date. The boom in exports

and the resultant increase in fish prices acted as an incentive to other communities and the number of people accessing fishing licenses and fishing permits increased. The universal biological laws applied and this has resulted into decreases in fish catches on average.

On a negative side and in regard to fish marketing, the district officials believe that before fish export boom, even local markets were not fully and there was generally low demand for fish. The international fish trade originated into exposure of local and regional markets. In fact, the concern, which is still an issue to-date, was that export of Nile perch has left Ugandans with no fish to eat and whatever is produced is exported. This argument is however not valid. There are many species that produced within the Uganda waters. Only one type of fish is the major export i.e. Nile perch. It therefore untrue that there is no fish to eat by Ugandans since all is exported.

4.2 Fishing Communities

Visits to fishing communities were made and a number of observations were noted in relation to the objectives of the visits. Fishing communities believe that global fish trade has brought benefits as well as problems. From the benefits side, most fishing communities believe that fish exports have generated more money for boat owners and fishermen. In most of the landing sites where Nile perch fishery is common, there is an evidence of infrastructure development in form of shops, bigger boats and local fish processing facilities. The fishermen and boat owners at Majanji landing site in Busia district claim that fish trade especially to the neighboring Kenya has raised their standards of living. The Uganda Participatory Assessment Programs by the Ministry of Finance revealed that poverty in most fishing communities has reduced as a result of Nile perch export.

On the problems side, fishing communities believe that the export of most species of fish have increased fish prices and therefore some communities that largely depended on fish as a source of livelihood food have lost out. Some group of individual communities claim that certain species of fish are too expensive and cannot even be found on the market. At Katosi landing site in Mukono, for example, one fisherman claims that he can go fishing but will hardly eat fish because it can fetch better prices and he cant eat fish when it can bring him money. Although this has not generated a convincing argument, it is important that certain livelihood issues be given attention in terms of maximizing benefits from export trade as well as improving the livelihoods of the poor.

On issues of returns to fishermen, fishing communities report that before fish export boom, returns at the time were low due to low fish prices. During the boom period, the returns from fish have increased. This issue can also be linked to the fish prices are household incomes.

Communities also note that the change within the fisheries sector has seen more people migrating to fishing communities especially at fish landing sites and also increasing the number of fishermen and boat owners. In general welfare levels have increased. There more activities at landing sites such as local fish processing, local fish trade, boat building thereby increasing the total employment numbers.

Fishing communities also report that fish export trade has boosted other forms of business. This includes business such as transport of fish from landing sites to fish markets and also to fish processing factories. Motor transport of people to and from fish landing sites and islands. The other form of transport that has been boosted as reported by communities in Busia, Masaka and Mukono districts is the boda-boda form of transport. This is the transport where small motorcycles are used to ferry people and other mechanize from specific locations to landing sites. All this is attributed to boom in the fish export industry.

Some of the landing sites have attracted private sector investors in form of petroleum industries. As a result of the boom in the fish export and local trade, some private businesspeople have established petroleum stations to capture the moving vehicles to and from the landing sites plus also the motor board boats, which are used to ferry fish and people to, and from the islands. This is common in Kalangala Islands where a number of fuel stations have been build as a result of this fish trade.

In regard to formation of marketing associations and benefiting from trade rules, communities indicated that they have already embraced the concept of beach Management Units (BMUs) initiated y government. Communities believe a lot in formation of marketing associations but ony indicated that they would first learn from the experiences of BMUs if they are fully operationalised.

5. Issues for fish marketing and trade

In regard to the observations made during these visits, it was understood that globalization as seen from increased fish export trade, benefits the country and most especially the fishing communities. It is also noted that through specific fiscal instruments, globalization has resulted into increased fiscal positions of local government institutions. This has come as a result of increased fish turnovers by traders and also fishing communities who have been the main target by a number of fiscal instruments.

It has been noted from the communities and local governments that there is a positive impact of globalization on fish utilization and marketing systems in Uganda.

There is strong feeling within the communities that formation of groups will enhance local and foreign fish trade as well as increasing benefits to the section of individuals involved in fish trade.