



The political economy of the fisheries sector in Uganda: ruling elites, implementation costs and industry interests

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	African Development Bank
AFALU	Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda
BMU	Beach Monitoring Units
DFR	Department of Fisheries Resources
EU	European Union
HAACP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
LRA	Lords Resistance Army
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries.
MOFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development.
MP	Member of Parliament
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NAFIRRI	National Fisheries Resources Research Institute
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PIR	Policies, Implementation arrangements and Results
UFPEA	Uganda Fish Processors and Exporters Association
UNBS	Uganda National Bureau of Standards
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to explain policies, implementation arrangements and results (PIRs) in Uganda's fisheries sector. Industry actors wanted to be able to keep up with European standards in order to survive in the chilled and frozen fillet export industry. They put pressure on ruling elites to support the establishment of effective hygiene and testing procedures. This helped the fishing industry succeed to an extent that helped create interests in the status quo. Fishermen, their dependents, and the fish processors all wanted to maintain a high level of fish catches. It was politically costly for ruling elites to enforce fisheries management because strict enforcement was unpopular with fishermen, as well as with many fishermen and security agents who benefitted from illegal fishing. Therefore, the success was not maintained: a pocket of efficiency was established with regard to hygiene and testing, but not with regard to enforcing fisheries management. Overfishing and the near collapse of the fishing sector were the results.

I. INTRODUCTION

Whereas the importance of the Ugandan fisheries sector in terms of employment, poverty reduction and foreign exchange revenues, as shown by its performance over the last two decades, is not in doubt, recent developments regarding its sustainability raises doubts about the effectiveness of the policies and strategies adopted for the sector. The fishing industry got going during the early 1990s and had become a great export success by the early 2000s. However, fish exports and catches in general have dwindled since 2006, due to overexploitation of the lakes. The latter half of the 2000s has seen a significant decline, not only in exports, but also of the total fish stock in Lake Victoria, as well as in other bodies of water in Uganda. No alternative, such as more fish farming, has yet been able to fill the gap in earnings created by the decline.

The drivers of success in the sector have mainly been private processors partly attracted by the liberalization of the sector and profitable European markets. The other key driver was the EU as a development partner that helped establish the infrastructure to meet international standards. The ability to live up to strict EU standards resulted from a series of bans implemented by the EU, which promoted a public-private partnership around quality controls. However, the same successful arrangement has not emerged in the upstream activities of regulating fishing. Catching immature fish using illegal fishing gear, for example, has continued. Whether restricting the Nile perch fishery is the right solution can be debated. The point here is not that the government has failed to adopt ‘the right policy’ but that it has effectively failed to address this issue in spite of the introduction of a new fisheries policy, with the result that

fish catches today are only a quarter of what they were in 2006.

This paper seeks to explain why it was possible to create a successful export industry but not be able to sustain it. Further, it asks why efforts at developing alternatives in terms of aquaculture have not succeeded.

Much of the current literature focuses on the lack of good governance, lack of political will or weak capacity in seeking to explain why policies fail. We argue that these factors are too general and basically are not able to explain why some policy initiatives are sometimes implemented while others are not, or why there are differences within sectors over time and between different sectors (Therkildsen, 2008). In order to understand such differences, a deeper understanding of the political economy of a productive sector is necessary. We draw upon a political economy framework inspired by Khan’s concept of the ruling coalition (Khan, 2010), combined with Geddes’ (1994) work on when elites decide or do not decide to implement reform, and with the literature on government–business relations in developing countries (e.g. Evans, 1995, Taylor, 2009). The framework helps to analyze why, how and with what outcomes political elites support the development of productive sectors such as fish (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011). The literature emphasizes that the composition and financing of the ruling coalition, the nature of electoral politics and the organization of industry actors affect the incentives that ruling elites face in policy-making and implementation.

The basic argument is that the ruling elite never paid much attention to the fisheries sector because (i) the fish-processing industry did not constitute an important support base for the regime, and in addition the fish processors did not put much pressure on the government to restrict access to the fisher-

ies resources; and (ii) fisheries management of the lake is costly and unpopular because of the fact that three countries are involved, the size of the area and because fishermen lose their livelihoods when illegal gear is impounded. The risk of losing votes in elections by clamping down on illegal fishing is high. Resistance to strict enforcement also comes from the agents involved, including elements of the security forces. Enforcement then does not help the ruling elite stay in power, but rather the opposite. Consequently, initiatives towards the sector were not coordinated but rather were ad hoc, reactive and characterized by a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the sector.

The paper sets out, first, by giving a brief overview of the fish sector before outlining the analytical framework it adopts. We go on to introduce Uganda's current political settlement before giving an account of the development of the Ugandan fisheries sector, particularly since the 1980s, thereby outlining the most important policies, implementation arrangements and results (PIRs) in the sector. Finally, the PIRs are explained using our analytical framework.

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE FISHERIES SECTOR

There are two major sources of fish in Uganda; one is from aquaculture, the other from fishing in rivers and lakes. The latter has made up the largest and most significant share of all fishing. Fishing is one of the major economic activities. Lakes, rivers and swamps account for 44,000 km² of Uganda's surface area of 241,000 km². Most of the fish in Uganda come from five major lakes: Victoria, Kyoga, Albert, Edward and George. The largest of these lakes is Lake Victoria, with a

surface area of 31,000 km² within Uganda's border. Its total surface area is 68,000 km², of which 43 percent is in Uganda, 51 percent in Tanzania and 6 percent in Kenya (Warui, 2007). Almost all of the processed and exported fish from Uganda is from Lake Victoria. Primary production of fish is generally done on a relatively small-scale, as most of the fishing is carried out using small, wooden (plank-built) boats about six to eight meters in length propelled by oars or, in an increasing number of cases, a petrol engine fastened to the back of the boat. These simple boats are sufficient to carry fishermen to and from the fishing grounds with full loads of fish.

There are an estimated 250,000 artisan fishermen (136,000 on Lake Victoria), while nearly a million people (700,000 around Lake Victoria) benefit from fishery-related activities like local fish-processing, fish trade, boat-building, industrial fish-processing, net-making, trade in fishing equipment, fisheries research, extension services and administration (USAID, 2002). The latest PEAP (2004-7) estimates indicate that 1.2 million Ugandans depend on fishery-related activities (PEAP, 2004: 78).

Table 1 shows the estimated fish catch in tons by the Department of Fisheries of the MAAIF over the period 1992-2006. It shows two things. First, Lake Victoria accounts for more than half of the total fish catch. Although, as we shall see below, the fish catch in Lake Victoria has declined sharply recently, so has the catch in other water bodies, so Lake Victoria remains by far the most important source of fish.¹ Secondly, the table also shows that between 2003 and 2004 fish production nearly doubled from 247,000 tonnes

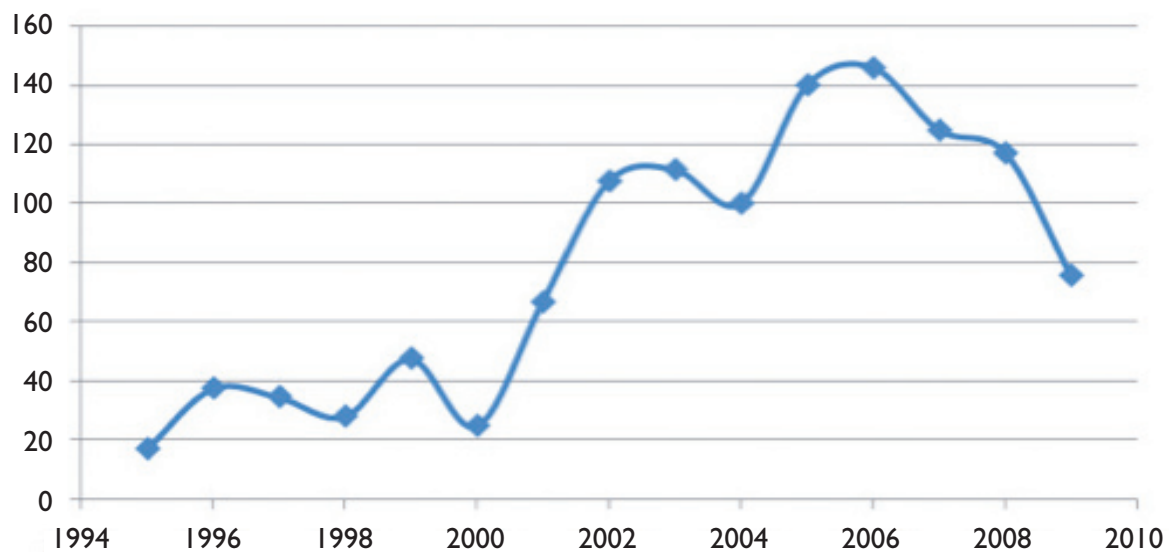
¹ For example, in 2008 in Lake Kyoga, catches were estimated to have declined from the more than 100,000 tonnes recorded in the early 1990s indicated in Table 1 to less than 30,000 tonnes (Muhoozi, 2008).

Table I. Uganda, fish catch by water body, 1992-2006 ('000 tonnes)

Lake	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06
Victoria	130	135	103	103	106	107	105	104	133	132	136	175	253	253	216
Albert	20	16	16	16	22	19	19	29	19	19	19	20	56	56	56
Kyoga	103	80	80	80	81	80	80	80	56	56	56	33	69	68	60
George	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	7	5	5	5	6	10	10	9
Others	6	7	9	9	9	7	7	8	6	6	6	8	47	29	27
Total	265	276	213	213	222	219	217	230	220	221	222	247	435	417	367

Source: Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (quoted in statistical Abstract 1997, 2002, and 2007)

Figure I. Exports fish products (mill. US\$)



Source: IMF statistics, Bank of Uganda, quarterly reports, and Private Sector Foundation, 2010.

to 435,000 tonnes. These changes can partly be attributed to the full recovery from the ban on fish exports imposed in 1999. They may also reflect improvements in security as a result of reduced rebel activities by the LRA after 2003, especially along Lake Kyoga—the second most important source of fish products in Uganda and Lake Albert.

Indeed, the tonnage from Lake Albert and Lake Kyoga more than doubled between 2003 and 2004.

The fish that supply Uganda's fish-processing industry come only from Lake Victoria. Fishermen bring the fish catches to landing sites, and from there some of the fish is channeled to the domestic market by local

fish traders and mongers. Most is taken up by factory processors either directly or through market agents. A very small part of this processed fish (frozen or fresh) is consumed in the local market; the bulk of it is exported, frozen or chilled.

There are about thirteen fish-processing factories owned by eight companies. Three factories have closed in recent years, due to the decline in fish stocks (to be discussed below). Fish processors go to specific landing sites to collect fish in their insulated trucks containing ice. The processors provide ice to the fish distributors who go to more distant islands to purchase fish, and they also pay the landing site authorities a fee for each truck that carries away fish from the landing site. Some processors have established their own landing sites, whose hygienic standards are generally higher than average. This development largely came as an effort to meet EU requirements.

Exports rose in the early half of the 2000s, but then declined sharply, as indicated in Figure 1, which clearly shows the success and subsequent decline of the fish exports. In the following, we look more closely at the explanations for the developments in the fisheries sector by exploring policies, initiatives and results in the sector, but first we outline the analytical framework and give a brief introduction to Uganda's ruling coalition.

3. OUTLINING THE POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH TO PRODUCTIVE SECTOR ANALYSIS

Much of the current literature focuses on lack of good governance, patrimonialism, or weak capacity in seeking to explain why policies fail (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002; van de Walle, 2001). We argue that these factors

are too general and basically are not able to explain why some policy initiatives are implemented while others are not and why there are differences within sectors over time, as well as between different sectors (Therkildsen, 2008). In order to understand such differences, a deeper and more contextual understanding of the political economy of a productive sector is necessary. Our starting point is that ruling elites will support productive sectors if it helps them to remain in power. Ruling elites base their power upon a range of legitimizing strategies, of which the most important ones are building a strong ruling coalition based on powerful supportive clienteles. Increasingly, remaining in power also depends on strategies that can win elections (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2011). Policies regarding the productive sector can be understood in terms of the way they are driven by such legitimizing concerns. In order to develop this understanding further, the concept of a ruling coalition is helpful (Khan 2010). We distinguish between ruling elite and ruling coalition. The ruling elite are the top political leaders in the incumbent regime. The 'ruling coalition' consists of the factions that support the ruling elite. In addition to the ruling elite, the ruling coalition thus consists of the individuals and groups who are behind the rise of the ruling elite and help them maintain power through their support (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011: 16). These groups often have considerable holding power. The 'holding power' of a faction is based on an assessment of its economic wealth, its legitimacy and its ability to organize supporters and to mobilize them politically (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011).

There are many individuals and factions in a ruling coalition, which often do not have the same interests. Also, there may be powerful factions that are excluded from the ruling coalition. A ruling coalition can promote

growth-enhancing initiatives if the factions excluded from it are weak and cannot oppose the implementation of a growth-enhancing initiative. Also, productive sector initiatives are difficult to implement if there are competing factions within the ruling coalition. Not only can such initiatives be resisted by various powerful factions, but in addition, the ruling elite may have to prioritize resource allocation in a way that primarily considers how to hold the ruling coalition together and prevent excluded factions from becoming influential. In addition, if the lower level factions within a ruling coalition are strong, they can powerfully resist the implementation of a productive sector initiative.

In the context of elections, the extent to which a productive sector policy appeals to a large number of voters is also part of assessing its feasibility in terms of implementation. When ruling elites need to win a majority of the votes in order to remain in power (even when the political system is not truly democratic), they need to consider the costs and benefits in terms of votes when deciding and implementing a particular initiative (Nelson, 2007; Kjær and Therkildsen, 2011).

In order to understand state initiatives or a lack of initiatives in the productive sectors, we therefore need to understand both how elections impact on these initiatives and how coalitions affect them. With regard to the latter, we need to explore industry actors' relations with the ruling coalition, for example, whether their support is important to the ruling elite and whether they have enough holding power to destabilize the regime. In order to understand specific policies and their outcomes, we also need to understand the bureaucratic capabilities in the sector and the bureaucrats' relations to industry actors. The nature of the bureaucracy and the role of the bureaucrats feature strongly in the develop-

mental state and business–state relations literature (Evans, 1995; Taylor, 2007).

Two features of the bureaucracy are important: the level of political support that bureaucrats have from the key political elite with relative autonomy from political interference, and the level of knowledge about the industry that bureaucrats have and their embeddedness in the industry, i.e. their connections with productive entrepreneurs in the relevant industry with relative autonomy from those entrepreneurs. In order to succeed in building a growth-enhancing institution, or what might be termed 'a pocket of efficiency' in an otherwise clientelist setting, political backing without too much political interference is generally seen to be necessary (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011).

To sum up, we focus on explaining policies, implementation arrangements and results in the fisheries sector. In doing so, we adopt a political economy approach to see how the PIRs have been influenced by the nature of the ruling coalition, the relationship of industry actors to the ruling coalition, whether elections have been important, and the nature of the relationship implementing bureaucracies and industry actors.

Uganda's ruling coalition

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) government makes up the core of the present ruling elite in Uganda. It is dominated by the president (Museveni), who is also party chairman and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This core consists of the president and his closest supporters, who are cabinet ministers, presidential advisers or top bureaucrats. In addition, military leaders are important members of the core of the ruling coalition, as are a few individual businessmen.

The NRM came to power after a civil war in 1986, and after a drawn-out process of drafting a new constitution won the first elections in 1996. After that, the Movement and Museveni have won elections in 2001, 2006 and 2011, the latter two under a multi-party system. Museveni's winning margin declined significantly from 54 percent in 1996 to 22 percent in 2006, and then went back up to 42 percent in 2011. The National Resistance Movement (NRM) is still strongly represented in parliament with 263 out of 364 elected seats, but there is considerable competition for parliamentary seats, increasingly within the Movement itself as well as outside it.

The ruling coalition consists of a number of factions which can perhaps best be defined regionally. The most important part of the ruling elite is from the southwestern part of the country, the former Ankole Kingdom, and the top positions are occupied by members of the Bahiima ethnic group within Ankole (e.g. the five full star generals in the army, and several ministers) (See Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2011). The ruling coalition was and to some extent still is based on an alliance with the Baganda elites from the south-central part of the country. This alliance has, however, fallen apart due to disagreement over controversial issues, such as land and federalism. There are few remaining Baganda left in the core of the ruling coalition, which has become more narrowly based on Movement loyalists. Since the Baganda have increasingly fallen out with the Museveni regime, and since they are not expected to provide any real political or military threat to it, the most important conflicts may thus be within the ruling coalition, which has been notable in conflicts between a new faction of critical Movement candidates who do not auto-

matically endorse President Museveni's initiatives in parliament.²

The support of the army is very important in maintaining those in power in Uganda. (Barkan, 2011). The support of factions in the army has been achieved by setting up a number of new security organizations. Uganda's *The Independent* identifies over thirty different security units.³ These security organs serve the function of building loyalty to Museveni and also make it more difficult to scheme against him. Many high-ranking officers benefited from the engagement in the Congo in what Barkan (2011: 9) has called the plundering of resources, as well as from the war in the north of Uganda, which many believe failed for so long because of corruption in the army and because individual officers benefited from it in various ways, for example, in the acquisition of land (Barkan, 2011; Tripp, 2010). These security agents could lose their privileges in terms of rent extractions and would risk prosecution should the NRM lose power, and this makes a strong incentive to keep Museveni in the presidency (Clark, 2002; Tripp, 2010). At the lower levels, NRM cadres are important support bases for the ruling coalition. The president appoints key government officials in the districts, resident district commissioners who play an active role in political mobilization through the local government structures and who are also chairmen of the local security committees (Ssemogerere, 2011: 82). Local Movement chairmen are powerful and have acquired holding power with the introduction of Movement primaries and decentralization.

² Tripp, 2010; *The Monitor*, 4 October 2011: 'They set the dogs on Bukenya, which NRM Big Man is Next?'

³ *Independent*, 11 February 2009: 'Museveni's many security organs: a ticking time bomb'.

Funding for the ruling coalition comes to a great extent from state resources. Most observers would argue that development aid has helped Museveni fund patronage to hold the ruling coalition together (Mwenda and Tangri, 2005; Tripp, 2010; Barkan, 2011). The movement also receives funding from individual businessmen, many of them Ugandan Asians, some of whom also have posts within the party (Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2011). Some of Museveni's family members hold important government positions but are also owners of big businesses, some of which are previously state-owned companies that have been privatized, such as Entebbe Handling Services (Salim Saleh and Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Museveni's brother and son). At least half of the most important NRM party leaders also hold posts as cabinet ministers or other important government jobs which they can use to channel funds into the NRM.

In sum, the ruling coalition is based in south-western Uganda, so there is a strong regional dimension. Competing factions within the party, both at lower levels and among central elites, are becoming stronger, so Uganda's ruling coalition can be characterized as fragmented. This impedes the implementation of policies to promote the productive sector. In the following, we address the implementation of initiatives taken in the fishing industry.

4. POLICIES, INITIATIVES AND RESULTS IN THE 1980s AND 1990s: THE RISE OF THE UGANDAN FISH-PROCESSING INDUSTRY.

As indicated in the introduction, processing of fresh fish into fillets did not really take off in Uganda until the late 1990s (Dijkstra and van Donge, 2001). However, there

were early attempts under the colonial government in the form of a processing plant built on the shores of Lake George in the western part of the country (Reynolds and Ssali, 1987). This factory produced smoked, salted and filleted frozen Tilapia fillets to be sold in the region. Two other factories in the same region were established and later two other factories in Kampala processing fish from Lake Victoria. However, none of these factories survived the turbulent Amin years (Reynolds and Ssali, 1987).

These early plants had all processed tilapia, a domestic species. During the 1980s, the Nile perch became more predominant. Nile perch is a predatory fish species that can grow very large (over 100 kilograms). It was introduced into Lakes Kyoga and Victoria from Lakes Albert and Turkana (in which it had been planted earlier) during the 1950s and early 1960s. The purpose of the introduction was for the Nile perch to feed on small-sized fish, especially haplochromine cichlids (Nkejje) which were at that time abundant but not commercially exploited and convert them into a larger fish of higher commercial and recreational value (Johnson, 2010; Reynolds and Ssali, 1987). Being a predator it has fed on other fish species, such as various cichlid-types, and reduced some of them to near extinction (Johnson, 2010). Nile perch was not exported on a large scale until the 1990s.

In the 1980s, unprocessed Nile perch was driven from Uganda to Kenya on trucks in order to be processed there. At the time, the fisheries sector was monopolized by government-owned processing, which basically meant that there was one state-owned processing plant in Jinja, which did not export; otherwise, there was no industrial fish processing. In 1991 the government decided to ban the exports of unprocessed fish to

Kenya.⁴ In addition, the general trend towards liberalization meant that neither fish production nor its processing could any longer be monopolized by government, and a number of new actors in the fisheries sector emerged. Fish production and processing increased significantly over the 1990s as the number of new processing plants along the lake shores emerged, increasing to sixteen by the mid 2000s. These plants produced frozen and chilled Nile perch fillets for exports. The factories buy the fish, process them and sell them to international importers, who organize the distribution, mainly to Europe, but also to the Middle East and the US.

The establishment of the fish-processing industry became possible because of the general political stability established after the National Resistance Movement's first years in power and the economic reforms that were carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most important of these were the general liberalization and removal of state monopolies on production, including privatization of the one government-owned fish factory.⁵ There was no sustained effort on the part of the state to establish a fishing industry, although the president has repeatedly talked about how he invited an Italian investor to start fish processing (HANSARD, June 1999, June 2003):

In 1986 an Italian professor came to see me – he was a Minister of Overseas Development – and told me that he had US\$ 14 million to give us in the form of assistance. Without asking anybody, I told him to build a fish-processing fac-

tory on Lake Victoria, and that is how the fish-processing industry started. (June 1999)

When we came in the Government, there was not a single factory anywhere in Uganda processing fish. I started the first factory at Masese using the money I got from the Italians, and I had no feasibility study, I had no pilot project, I just knew that a factory of fish would work. (June 2003)

However, these statements refer to the president's encouragement of one individual Italian investor, not to a sustained effort to promote the fisheries sector, nor any attempt to strengthen the institutions around it. In fact, during the late 1990s, some members of parliament raised the neglect of the fisheries sector in parliamentary debates on the European bans on fish imports, and MPs expressed concern with the 'bureaucratic inefficiencies' that had caused export collapse and noted how the Department of Fisheries Resources had been marginalized and needed to be strengthened (Hansard, March 16, August 15 and October 13, 1999). One MP, Fred Lukumu from Masindi District, argued that 'Government has not done enough to promote the fish industry. There has been little public investment in the fisheries industry. Almost on their own, fishermen have promoted the industry to the level of economic significance' (Hansard, August 12, 1999).

The most important role of government in promoting the fisheries sector was not so much in terms of investments, but more in terms of putting a ban on the export of unprocessed fish. Unprocessed fish had been taken out of Uganda to be processed in Kenya, and the government therefore put a ban on exporting unprocessed fish (secretary of

⁴ Interview, UFPEA, but see also Balaggadde, 2002; Juma, 2010; Ponte et al, 2010.

⁵ Balaggadde, 2003; interview, factory owner, October, 2009.

the processors' association, interviews 2009, 2010).⁶ According to Balaggadde (2002), the total investment by private investors in the fisheries sector in the period after the ban was introduced was around US\$ 100 million. These investors were mainly foreign, from Europe, Asia or the Middle East (Juma, 2010; Dijkstra and van Donge, 2002). Thus, the investors were not related to Uganda's political establishment, although, according to Juma (2010), some of them did hire influential Ugandans as managers. Hence, the growth in fish-processing around the shores of Lake Victoria was made possible by a more conducive environment in terms of general liberalization, political stability and a ban on exports of raw fish, but it was driven by the private sector. There were two periods of investment. The first was between 1989 and the mid-1990s, when nine plants were established (Ponte, 2005: 44). The second period came after the crisis caused by the EU bans had been resolved in the new Millennium.

The majority of the fresh Nile perch is exported to Europe, which imposes health standards using the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HAACP) procedure. This procedure focuses on a range of issues, including hygienic conditions at landing sites, handling and packaging requirements, and product monitoring and documentation. The first EU ban on imports of fish from Lake Victoria was issued in 1997 due to concerns over salmonella (Kaelin, 2002). The second ban came in 1998 and was due to a cholera outbreak. The third ban, lasting for over a year (April 1999 to July 2000), was in a way self-imposed, in that the Uganda National Bureau of Standards announced that fish were being caught by poisoning, after which

the EU imposed a further ban. These bans were extremely costly for the fishing industry. Export earnings fell from 45 million dollars in 1996 to 24.7 million in 1999 (Kaelin, 2002: 3; Ponte, 2005; Juma, 2010).

In addition to the bans, EU inspectors assessed the whole system of testing in Uganda and came up with recommendations as to how the chain of command between the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) under the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry and fish inspection services in the Department of Fisheries Resources (DFR) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries could become more clearly demarcated (Bazaara, 2001; Ponte, 2005). The DFR inspectors could not carry out their duties, as they did not have clear guidelines or standard operating practices, in particular with regard to inspecting batches of fish being landed, hygiene conditions at landing sites, sampling procedure records of their own activities and documents required for traceability of the origin and transportation of fish. In addition, district fisheries officers were not answerable to DFR and hence did not follow the instructions regarding hygiene and the handling of fish as required by EU regulations (Bazaara, 2001).

These observations and recommendations induced the Ugandan fisheries authorities to reform the system of testing, and the bans forced the industry to establish procedures satisfying safety requirements. This was done in a successful partnership between public organizations (the Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries, and the Uganda National Bureau of Standards), the fish factory owners and development partners such as UNIDO) (Ponte, 2006: 185). Before the bans tests had to be done outside Uganda, but subsequent to the latest ban of 1999, the proces-

⁶ The secretary of the processors association, interviews, October 2009 and August 2010.

sors invited a Belgian company to set up a European standards laboratory to do tests in Uganda. UNIDO provided technical assistance in preparing responses to the EU Commission regarding the guarantees put in place by Uganda to meet EU requirements. The fish inspection services were streamlined and the capacity of the Department for Fisheries Resources strengthened through the training of inspectors, provision of equipment and introduction of a fish inspection manual (Bazaara, 2001). Also, the UNBS supervised a new laboratory set up to do microbiological testing (*ibid.*).

The processors on the Ugandan side of Lake Victoria had formed the Uganda Fish Processors and Exporters Association in 1993, when they were only six processors.⁷ When the EU salmonella ban was introduced, UFPEA's activities centered on trying to mobilize the capacity meet the European standards.⁸ The main concern of these factory owners was to have reliable access to the European market. The plant owners invested heavily in order to satisfy these requirements (Kaelin, 2002: 9; Juma, 2010), and they were a major driving force in getting the Ugandan systems upgraded (*ibid.*; Ducher and Webber, 2010: 122). The success of the Ugandan fishing industry thus lay in establishing the ability to establish procedures of hygiene and testing so that Lake Victoria fish fillets would be accepted by European inspectors. Ponte (2005, 2007) has argued that the achievements represented not so much a real improvement in fish quality but rather acquiring the ability to follow certain test procedures. At the point of fish capture not much had changed, and

only a small proportion of landing sites were in fact thoroughly upgraded; about fourteen out of the six hundred on the Ugandan part of Lake Victoria were approved for exports (Ducher and Webber, 2010). After the system was reformed it seemed to function adequately, and EU inspectors have visited the fishing grounds on a regular basis (interview, UFPEA secretary, October, 2009).⁹

After the European ban was lifted in July 2000, fish exports increased immensely, as Figure 1 shows. The export value of fish products went up from a low of about 20 million US dollars in 2000 to a high of 146 million dollars in 2006. Fish exports in this period earned almost as much as coffee, a traditional export commodity. For example, in 2004 the value of coffee earnings was about 124 million dollars and that of fish earnings about 103 million. The value of all other export commodities, such as tea, cotton or cut flowers, were all well below 50 million dollars in the same year (data from the Uganda Export Promotion Board).

Thus, the initial success of Uganda's fisheries exports was primarily due to industry actors in the collaborate efforts of the owners of processing factories to achieve government cooperation in setting up quality and testing procedures. These efforts were a consequence of a series of bans. Donor pressure has also mattered in persuading the government to strengthen the capacity of the Fisheries Department and UNBS to be able to follow the required health procedures. As a consequence exports grew, and as Ponte (2007) observes, this also led the way to a new fisheries policy in 2004.

⁷ Interview, October 2009, with the then Chairman (until 2011).

⁸ Interview, UFPEA general secretary, March 2011.

⁹ Interview, UFPEA general secretary, October 2009.

Policies, Initiatives, and Results (PIRs) in fisheries in the new millennium

As can be seen from Figure 1, the growth in fish exports only lasted for a few years, during which a number of policy initiatives were taken. The fisheries policy in existence at the time dated from 1964, and there was a recognized need for an updated policy for the sector (Bahigwa, et al., 2003), a need that had become obvious during the exercise to strengthen the whole system in response to the EU bans (Ponte, 2005). In 2000 the DFR began a process to formulate a new National Fisheries Policy (NFP), a process which resulted in the policy being submitted to Cabinet in 2003 and legislated in parliament in 2004. In between, the sector appears to have been operating on ad hoc policy proposals and specific projects. One observer who has studied the initiatives taken regarding the Lake Victoria fisheries came up with the label 'manic management', indicating long periods of neglect and then sudden ad hoc intervention to limit the fisheries (Johnson, 2009).

The main goal of the new fisheries policy is to ensure increased and sustainable fish production and utilization by properly managing capture fisheries, promoting aquaculture and reducing post-harvest losses (MAAIF, 2004). Among the ways to achieve this goal was to support decentralized co-management practices (Beach Management Units), strengthen the capacity of local governments and set up a Fisheries Authority with strengthened capacity to regulate.

However, the new 2004 policy, although debated in and enacted by Parliament (Hansard, 2004), has not been turned into a fisheries bill approved and implemented by the government. This means that many of the suggestions in the fisheries policy, for example, for the establishment of a semi-autonomous Fisheries Authority to replace the Department of

Fisheries Resources, have never materialized. In the meantime, DFR introduced additional fisheries legislation that is urgently needed in key areas. It achieved this through the development of a series of Statutory Instruments, especially the new legislation establishing co-management of fisheries resources.¹⁰ This has been achieved through legislation empowering the formation of community Beach Management Units (BMUs) for fisheries planning and management.

The national fisheries policy and BMU rules have to be seen in the light of the regional efforts at managing Lake Victoria. The establishment of BMUs has received substantial support from the EU's Fisheries Management Program. This program has funded the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization, which has substantially boosted fisheries management in Lake Victoria. As the program is phased out, there is likely to be a lack of funding for the BMUs. The Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) was established in 1994 as a regional organization (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda) with a head office in Jinja, Uganda. Its key responsibility is to implement joint regional fisheries management of the lake. The main policy of the LVFO is thus enshrined in the Fisheries Management Plan, initiated in 2002, which at its core aims at co-management and the involvement of local communities in fisheries management. Therefore, the LVFO also works to strengthen the policy frameworks of the three partner countries, and it has had an impact on the Ugandan fisheries policies. Specifically, the Ugandan statute on BMUs (2003) and the National Fish Policy followed the regional East African initiative.¹¹

¹⁰ The Fishing (Beach Management) Rules, Statutory Instrument No. 35, 11 July 2003.

¹¹ Interview with LVFO director, Mr Nyeko, October 2009.

The New National Fisheries Bill and the various statutory instruments of decentralized co-management notwithstanding, the fish stocks in Uganda's lakes have declined. In Lake Victoria, stocks of Nile perch declined dramatically, from an estimated two million tons in 2005 to 370,000 tons in 2008 (FAO Globe-fish report, 2009). In addition, the numbers of large Nile perch (above 35 cm) have declined quite rapidly over the last two decades. The National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NaFIRRI) carries out regular stock assessments of the lake using acoustic surveys, which also show a drastic reduction in the biomass of Nile perch. Between 1999 and 2009, the biomass of Nile perch is estimated to have fallen from 1.3 million tons to 0.3 million.¹² In other lakes, fish stocks have gone down drastically as well (Muhoozi, 2008). Accordingly, export earnings in Uganda have declined in recent years, as indicated in Figure 1 above. Some processing factories around the lake have closed (in Uganda, three out of sixteen according to the processors association) and the rest operate at reduced capacity. Part of this is self-inflicted: since 2006 the processors have established a procedure for self-regulation by which they let independent inspectors control their factories in order to prevent processors from buying fish below 50 cm.¹³ If a factory is caught buying too small fish, it will have to close down for a period of time, and if it is caught again, then a longer period of time. This system has proved to be effective. However, a large part of the export decline is due to the declining stocks.

Personal narratives from the lakes have the same bottom line: there are fewer and smaller fish in the lake. Fishermen have to spend a

longer time on the lake and come back with fewer fish.¹⁴ Fisheries officers at Katozi landing sites told the authors in 2009 that: *'The trade has been high over the last years but it is now dwindling due to too much fishing efforts. We used to get 15-20 tonnes a day at this landing site. Now it is about three3. This year has been the worst'* (interview, October 8). The decline in fish stocks has reportedly begun to affect local communities around Lake Victoria, where over six million people are estimated to be dependent upon incomes from fisheries (Marshall, 2010). Fishermen feel they have to fish longer hours and go farther away from the coast to catch fish, yet still catch less.¹⁵

This decline in fish stocks is a consequence of overfishing the lakes. The increasing number of fishermen, combined with an increased capacity for fish processing, mean that more fish have been caught. Van der Knaap and Ligtoet (2010: 432) report an increase of fishing boats on Lake Victoria between 1985-2000 of 349 percent. Brian Marshall (2010) reports a considerable increase in the number of fishermen, fishing boats, illegal and legal gill nets in the period between 2000 and 2008 (about a fifteen percent annual increase).¹⁶ According to the LVFO, whereas there were about 10,000 vessels fishing in Lake Victoria in the 1980s, this had risen to 60,000 around the millennium, with an approximate crew of three men per boat. LVFO sources estimate the total number of fishermen in Lake Victoria to have gone up from 129,300 in 2000 to about 199,300 in 2008. On Lake Kyoga, the

¹⁴ IRIN | August 2008: 'Lake Victoria degradation threatening livelihoods'.

¹⁵ Inter Press Service, 18 October 2010; own interviews at landing sites.

¹⁶ Although recently, the average catch per boat is estimated by the LVFO to have declined from 300 kilos per day in 2005 to 80 kilos per days in 2008 (Inter Press service, 18 October 2010).

¹² Njiru, et al., 2006; UFPEA fish newsletter, vol. 9, 2009; Parliament sessional committee report, 2010.

¹³ Many thanks to Stefano Ponte for making this point.

number of fishing boats doubled over a decade, whereas the fish catch declined by over two thirds (Muhoozi, 2008).

In addition, a lot of the decrease in biomass can be explained by the overfishing of young fish. Surveys show that there are large numbers of young Nile perch, but they are being caught when they are still below 30-50 cm of length. The weight of Nile perch increases exponentially with its length. Therefore, a small increase in the average length of the fish could double the biomass. In addition to the overfishing of small fish, there is general overfishing in the lake. It is estimated that the yield of fishery should not exceed forty percent of its biomass. However, in Lake Victoria catches have been increasing, while biomass has been on the decline. NaFIRRI estimates that the Nile perch yields were twice the optimal limit in the 2000s and that there is a need for a reduction in the fishing effort of at least forty percent (UFPEA fish newsletter, Vol. 9, 2009).

There is a considerable degree of illegal fishing in the main lakes. Illegal nets are so closely knit that they catch undersized fish, and this contributes to the deterioration of the stock. The number of illegal gillnets used on Lake Victoria, for example, is thought to be around 208,000, a quarter of the number of legal nets (805,700) (Marshall, 2010). Smuggling fish to Congo and other neighboring countries continues to take place and contributes to the overfishing.

Overfishing is an indication that government management and implementation of the various policy initiatives have been highly inadequate. Fishing in Lake Victoria is basically free to everyone, making it a classic example of a common pool resource that is not adequately regulated. Management of a common pool resource such as the fisheries is never easy. In East Africa, the chal-

lenges facing the lake fisheries are complex, not least on the lakes that are shared among several countries such as Lakes Edward and Albert (Uganda, Congo) and Lake Victoria (Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya). The Uganda national fisheries policy (2004) reflects the most common approach internationally to fisheries resource management: in order to ensure continued wealth and job creation from the lakes, fishing must be restricted and limited to fish above a certain size. This is to be done through a mix of controlling and decentralized co-management (Bene, Hersoug, and Allison, 2010; World Bank, 2007). This approach may not, of course, be the only or indeed the right approach. Arguments have been put forward that given lake resources in poor countries are generally not only very difficult to manage, but also that restricting access to the resources would also mean excluding people from pursuing their livelihoods. Thus, the use of lakes, according to this argument, should be allowed in order not to drive people out of their jobs (Bene, Hersoug and Allison, 2010). This paper does not take the stand that restriction of access to the lake is necessarily the best policy. The focus of this paper is rather to explain why fisheries resource management has been given little attention, regardless of the choice of policy.

Below we address some of the most crucial aspects of implementing fisheries resource management. These are elements that have all been emphasized in the national fish policy (MAAIF, 2004), or else they have been highlighted as important in restricting fishing in the lake (Juma, 2010). The first two are important elements in highlighting the 'free for all' practice of implementation that led to over-fishing. These are (i) the licensing of factories, (ii) the licensing of fishing boats. The third and fourth elements have to do with the institutional framework surrounding

fish management, i.e. (iii) non-implementation by the Fisheries Authority, and (iv) the functioning of BMUs. The fifth and sixth elements have to do with neglect and the lack of implementation of programs to promote the sector, i.e. (v) lack of implementation of program to upgrade landing sites, and (vi) limited attention to aquaculture. They all indicate that the ruling elite has been unable to establish a pocket of capability to manage the fisheries resource. They also indicate the very low level of political attention given to the sector.

(i) The licensing of factories

One important aspect of the over-exploitation of the fisheries resource is the fact that a lot of factories were licensed to operate in Uganda. The argument has thus been put forward that the number of factories, as well as the quantity they were allowed to process, was too high. In his dissertation, Juma (2010: 273) argues that ‘the state has concentrated on ensuring that fish trade is not interrupted without realizing that the basis for fish trade is a well-managed fishery’. Several individuals knowledgeable about the fish industry agreed with this. For example, the chairman of the fish processors association, UFPEA, told us that: ‘Government definitely licensed too many factories; government should see what we are gaining from limiting fisheries. We [in UFPEA] opposed new licenses, this was in 2003, and the commissioner in the Department of Fisheries Resources (DFR) was furious, because he considered it an achievement to get more factories’ (interview, March, 2011). Another observer wondered: ‘Why did they license so many factories? The fisheries people did not know the stock and that it was depleting, so they did not act accordingly. The commissioner in DFR said: the fish is there. UFPEA is only talking about depletion because they wanted to stop competition. And

then he continued licensing, which meant the fish were being depleted. He licensed too many companies’ (Researcher with the Private Sector Foundation, Uganda, 10 August 2010). Even the then Minister for Agriculture, Mr Onek, admitted to parliament (Hansard, 28 August 2008) that ‘Yes, I agree with some of your comments that there has been some indiscipline by those who should be regulating the fishery industry, particularly the lakes, and then coupled by increased processing factories. The number of factories went up dramatically.’ It seems as if short-term revenue concerns and a desire to have a successful sector to bring in foreign exchange earnings were stronger than the desire to maintain a sustainable fisheries sector in the long run.

The increase in the number of fish factories resulted in a large demand for Nile perch, which again increased competition among factory owners, increased the price of Nile perch and induced more people to enter the fisheries sector by investing in small vessels (Juma, 2010: 285). The factories’ increased need for raw fish contributed strongly to the overfishing.

Along the way, the processors realized that fish resources were dwindling and, given the lack of effective government enforcement, they initiated a self-policing system in which they committed themselves to not buy small fish, as fish catches had already peaked and the stock was in decline.¹⁷

(ii) The licensing of fishing boats

Another aspect of licensing is that of fishing boats. This was the responsibility of local governments, and the revenues collected in this way belonged to local governments. However, it turned out that local governments saw this as such a welcome revenue

¹⁷ Interviews, UFPEA secretary, factory owner; Juma, 2010.

source, particularly after the abolition of another important local revenue source, the graduated personal tax in 2005, that too many boat licenses were issued. There were no restrictions at all on the number of fishing boats on the lake, and in about 2008 the Department of Fisheries Resources decided to abandon the licensing until a better method of limiting the number of boats had been found.¹⁸ Since then, the access of boats to the lake has been free to everyone. 'We unfortunately decentralized licensing, which is ideally a management tool. The local governments mistook it for revenue, so the more licenses to fisherboats the more revenue. Because LGs have an interest in more revenue, they generally gave out licenses to everyone.'¹⁹ A local fisheries officer adds that in his view, the problem with the license was that the revenues from the vessel license benefited the district coffers in general but were not given to the fisheries sector.²⁰ The issue here may be not so much whether the decentralized management of licensing is the best solution or not, but rather that this solution was never backed with a strengthening of the capacity of the local governments that were in charge of issuing the licenses (World Bank, 2007). Licensing fishing boats became a way of creating rents. With the multiplication of district governments in Uganda, the capacity gap at the district and sub-county levels is likely to become more significant, as the many new districts have serious staffing and capacity problems (Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2009).

¹⁸ Interviews, agricultural officer, EU, 13 August 2010, Fisheries Officer, Department of Fisheries Resources, 6 October 2009, local fisheries officer, Mukono, 8 October 2009; Juma, 2010: 273.

¹⁹ Interview with fisheries officer at DFR, 6 October 2009.

²⁰ Local fisheries officer in Mukono, interviewed 8 October 2009.

(iii) The Uganda Fisheries Authority

The National Fisheries Policy from 2004 included the establishment of a semi-autonomous agency, a Uganda Fisheries Authority with an appointed executive and a governing board (UFA) (MAAIF, 2004). Such an authority was also included in the PEAP policy actions in 2004 (RoU, 2004). The main reasons given in the policy document for setting up such an authority were that it would enable better service delivery in fisheries, that an agency would be able to be more flexible with regard to the recruitment of staff and budget issues because it would be outside the ordinary civil service rules, and that in general it would therefore have more freedom to manage the fisheries (MAAIF, 2004: 48).

Setting up a semi-autonomous body in order to improve regulation may not necessarily be the right policy, and arguments for other solutions, such as strengthening the existing Department of Fisheries Resources (DFR) within MAAIF, were put forward (MAAIF, 2004). One agricultural consultant had argued against setting up an authority in the fisheries sector on the grounds that strengthening the existing structures, in this case the DFR, would have the same effect (interview, October 2009). However, during a period in which establishing authorities was considered the right way to boost efficiency in a particular sector, and given that such an authority would need initial support from government, the mere fact that a regulatory body were set up would arguably be an indicator that there is political support for the sector and that improving efficiency in regulation is considered politically desirable.

After the National Fisheries Policy had been introduced, the work to prepare the establishment of a Fisheries Authority began. A draft Fisheries Bill that included the Authority was drafted, and a consultancy was carried

out to draft a proposal about how to fund an authority (Neilnd, 2005). In 2006, an EU implementation framework study observed that setting up a fisheries authority to improve fisheries management in Uganda ‘was imminent’ (Paton et al., 2006), and in the same year, a big trade diagnostics report by a multi-donor trade support program (EIF, 2006: 126-127) observed how a fisheries authority to take over the many sector management functions of the DFR was a ‘central element’ in the fisheries policy.

However, the draft fisheries bill was never enacted, but remained pending and did not pass through cabinet. The lack of a fisheries bill to follow up on the new national policy means that the rules and regulations that currently guide the sector are not clear. The staffing and budgetary problems which were the main arguments for setting up an authority are thus still urgent. The Department of Fisheries Resources is considered to be weak, understaffed and with little capacity to enforce management of the fisheries.²¹

(iv) The functioning of BMUs

The National Fish Policy from 2004 and the BMU Statute of 2003 provides for community involvement in fisheries management in the form of Beach Management Units (BMUs) on all Uganda’s lakes. The rationale for this was based on the failure of the centralized ‘command-and-control’ approach that had little or no community involvement in decision-making processes. This had proved to be a costly approach requiring a large number of government personnel. The failure to consult stakeholders and communities effectively meant that rules were often perceived to lack legitimacy, thus lessening the chances of com-

pliance (MAAIF, 2004: 23). Under BMUs, the responsibility of all fisheries stakeholders in managing the country’s fisheries sector is shared. Membership of the BMUs includes all fisheries stakeholders around a landing site, such as boat owners, fishing crew, fishmongers, fish processors, local gear makers, and boat makers and repairers. The BMU committee consists of ten members elected by the landing sites’ BMU members, three local government fisheries officers, the district planner and the district environmental officer (DFR, 2004: 13).

The very first pilot BMUs were set up around the year 2000 (Odongkara, 2009). The BMUs are established as legal entities and form the framework within which members of the fishing community enjoy rights of access and decision-making regarding the fisheries resources. Most BMUs have so far been set up as part of a donor-supported project. For example, the World Bank-supported LVEMP I (Lake Victoria Environmental Management) project (running from 1997-2005) supported various environmental aspects of Lake Victoria, including fisheries resource management and Beach Management Units (World Bank, 2009; Odongkara, 2009). It was under the Integrated Fisheries Management Project with the LVFO and supported by the EU that BMUs really took off. The LVFO established 355 BMUs around the Ugandan lake shores. The BMUs carry out all activities mainly related to control of the fisheries (with regard to illegal fishing and fishing gear), sanitation at landing sites and the sensitization of fishermen (LVFO, 2004; Odongkara, 2009).

Where BMUs have functioned, they have apparently functioned well. This has happened in the places where they have had adequate support. Where BMUs have so far been instituted, there is a remarkable improvement in the way fishery activities are managed.

²¹ Interviews in and outside the Fisheries Department; EIF, 2006.

BMUs seem to have the potential to get rid of the crude fishing methods that threaten fishing on lakes and rivers.²² The problem is that the BMUs are not backed up by local governments with regard to resources and the banning of illegal fishing. The problems in implementation usually concern the outreach of the BMU units, and also there are regular cases of collusion where especially traders pay BMUs to turn a blind eye.²³ Most interviewees in the sector emphasize the need for better monitoring by the Department of Fisheries Resources, and more support of the BMUs in terms of logistics, training etc. However, since the Department of Fisheries Resources does not have adequate capacity, this is not happening. These observations are in line with what is always recommended about decentralized fisheries management: it only works when it is backed up by resources (World Bank, 2007). As one fisheries officer in Mukono puts it: 'We cannot block all the exits for the small fish. Even if we block one, they will create another. Sometimes they (the fishermen) collude with the BMUs. They pay the BMUs to turn the blind eye' (interviewed 8 October 2009).

A presidential directive suddenly lifting the ban on catching illegal fish apparently caused a lot of confusion and did not help to make enforcement any easier for the BMUs. In 2004, several members of parliament from fishing constituencies brought up the fact that the president had suddenly allowed the catching and export of small fish. Due to protests that this would deplete the fish stocks in the lake, the ban was soon reinstated. Parliamentarians raised the issue of how the contradictory mes-

sages from government were confusing and how this was making it even more difficult to enforce the rules about the minimum sizes of fish (Hansard, 17 and 19 February 2004). It was argued that fishermen had invested in gear that could catch small fish, and then after few weeks, when the ban was re-instated, the gear was declared illegal. MPs observed how the officials and security officers that were implementing the directives had relaxed their enforcement after the president's lifting of the ban and that they had started accepting bribes in order to do so (Hansard, 2004, 17 February). In sum, attempts at co-management in the form of beach management units have been successful in only a few places, and there are pressing concerns with regard to implementation. Although it is clear that even if political support had been more pronounced, enforcement would have been difficult, and it is evident that there has not been any sustained or wholehearted attempt by the ruling elites to build enforcement capacity.

(v) ADB program to upgrade landing sites

In 2002, parliament approved a loan provided by the African Development Bank for a Fisheries Development Project whose main purpose was to upgrade landing sites and to support aquaculture research through the construction of facilities at the Kajjansi Aquaculture Research Institute (project description at www.adb.org, project AAF-002). The project was supposed to run from 2003 to 2008, but its implementation was severely delayed, officially postponed until 2010. Questions by MPs still recur in parliament about the lack of implementation. According to the original project, thirty landing sites were supposed to have been upgraded with parts of the 22 million dollar loan. However, during a debate in parliament in 2010, the criticism was made that in that year work on

²² Local fisheries officer, interview, June 2011; The head of the LVFO, interviewed October 2009; DFR official, interviewed October 2009.

²³ Interviews at landing sites, October 2009; LVFO executive secretary, October 2009.

only twelve landing sites had begun and not yet been finished.²⁴ Further, some of the facilities, such as ice cooling, that were included in the project had allegedly not been provided, even in the landing sites where construction had started. According to the then Minister of State for Fisheries, Frank Mukisa, these delays were due to the fact that local governments had to secure the land titles and evict settlers from the areas where the landing sites were to be constructed. On 14 August 2008 this was debated in parliament, and several MPs argue that they had made sure land titles in their constituencies had been secured. For example, one MP, Mr Okupa, argues: 'I even did participate in acquiring land for the three landing sites of Bugondo, Kagwara and Mulondo in Kasilo. I did it in 2003. I was among the first few to submit this. We evicted people and secured land. It even almost cost some of us our constituencies in the 2006 elections. I am surprised that the answer given by the minister cannot cater for my side because I did this much earlier.' (Hansard, August 14, 2008).

The lack of implementation of this program is another indicator of a weak implementing agency.

(vi) Aquaculture.

The promotion of fish farming has been emphasized in several policy documents, including the PEAP (2004), the Strategic Export Initiative (2001) and the National Fisheries Policy (2004). There was also a component to strengthen aquaculture research in the ADB project mentioned above. However, none of these have really taken off. Aquaculture in Uganda has grown somewhat lately, but the question is the extent to which this is a result

of sustained government efforts. Juma (2010) concludes that aquaculture has been very slow to develop, and a recent USAID project to support aquaculture had given up working with the government and had found it more fruitful to cooperate with the private sector (LEAD, 2009).

The government's 2001 strategic export initiative never really succeeded in providing seeds in the form of fish fry for farmers' ponds. This issue was raised several times by MPs in parliamentary debates. In addition, interview respondents from Mbarara district indicated that only a very few individuals had benefitted from the delivery of fish fry from this program. A fish farmer interviewed in the area had received fry from a relative in Kabale and had not received any extensions service or other government support.

The agricultural services reform program (NAADS) was intended to improve agricultural extension in general, including with regard to fish farming to the extent that this is demanded by farmers. However, interviews with local government officials in Mbarara and Mukono Districts indicate that fish farming has not been adopted by NAADS farmer groups. This has to do with many factors, among them the fact that there has not been adequate information on how to raise fish. Another is the increase in the number of districts, which has implied a deterioration of local government capacity due to a lack of staff and resources. For example, the split of Greater Mbarara into smaller administrative units has created capacity problems. The fish officer (Mbarara) pointed out how he used to have five assistants but that, after the split, he now works alone. The NAADS officer (Mukono) says fish farming has been around for some time but on a small scale. For instance, in 2009, the NAADS program picked one model farmer to be supplied with fish fry. She

²⁴ Hansard, 14 August 2008; Report of Sessional Committee on Agriculture 2009/10, and debate, 15 July 2010.

emphasizes that feed is a problem because most farmers consider it too expensive. The lack of feed has led to the collapse of several fish-farming enterprises. Others still remain. She also emphasizes that there are limits to how much they can do within their resource limits (interviewed, 8 October 2009).

Besides NAADS, there have been other attempts to attract investments in fish farming. For example, the Uganda Investment Authority has helped a South African investor establish fish farming in cages on the shores of Lake Victoria (interview, UIA director, August, 2010). However, when interviewed this investor mentioned the huge difficulties involved in the establishment process, including having to sue the Ugandan government to acquire access to land and an inability to retrieve transported equipment. The investor had finally given up fish farming and opted for the capture and subsequent drying and exporting of a type of small fish from Lake Victoria called Mukene (interview, August 2010).

Successful fish farming requires knowledge about the construction of fish ponds, how to feed and raise the fish, maintain the ponds etc. The Kajjansi research institute in Entebbe is supposed to provide this type of information, and the ADB loan mentioned above was supposed to upgrade the research station. However, according to the recent Agriculture Committee report, in addition to the lack of landing sites, the building of new facilities at Kajjansi has also been significantly delayed. 'The inability to complete the works means there are no facilities to do research', a research officer told *New Vision* (30 September 2010).

These examples of the weak ability to support beach monitoring, to implement initiatives in aquaculture and to upgrade landing sites are all evidence of the weak capacity of

the DFR. The kind of capacity and public-private partnerships that characterized safety and health standards were not established in the area of fisheries resource management. This has a lot to do with the low prioritization of the DFR in terms of budgets. A consultancy for implementing the new fisheries policy thus observed that 'the weak performance of fisheries management policy in the past can be attributed to a lack of government investment and support for administrative and management systems appropriate to the sector' (Neilnd, 2005: 9). One officer in MAAIF stressed the lack of manpower and added: 'The budgets are meager. The patrol boats consume a lot of fuel. You have a dysfunctional system. The logistical support cannot function. They bought boats that were cheap but too costly to run' (interview, March 2011). Budgets are considered to be the main problem. There is a double problem here, because first, allocations have to go from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED) to the MAAIF. These allocations are not regular because MAAIF has often had difficulties in living up to MOFPED's requirements for allocations (such as having a proper budget to show) (interview, MOFPED official, October 2009). Secondly, funds have to be moved within MAAIF to the DFR, and this has also been a problem, with as little as ten percent of what was originally planned reaching the DFR.²⁵ The chairman of the processors' organization (UFPEA) experienced this in person when he contacted the DFR in order to talk to them about lake patrolling. The officer there revealed that there was no money for patrolling because the DFR had not received it, and then the UFPEA chairman took it

²⁵ Interview, private sector development advisor, Danida, March 2011.

upon himself to review the DFR budget and write directly to MOFPED to induce them to make the permanent secretary in MAAIF transfer the funds to DFR (but to no avail). He added that, although the industry is now regulating itself, it does not have the capacity to patrol with the boat or indeed the legal mandate to arrest people (interview, March, 2011). The story is in line with what one observer called ‘a disastrous neglect of the sector’ (private sector advisor, March 2011). A recent EU evaluation of its support to Uganda observes that ‘further budget allocations to fisheries management would have been desirable’ (EVA, 2009).

In addition to being underfunded, the DFR is also known to be understaffed. At one time the position of commissioner was vacant for more than two years following the departure of the former occupant to the Lake Victoria Fisheries Association (interviews; see also Hansard, 4 June 2009). The long vacancy in the post of commissioner has occurred previously – in the 1990s as well, coming up in a parliamentary debate in 1999 in which one MP argued that ‘About the Fisheries Department, it is not considered as a core sector in Government. If you go to the Ministry, whereas crop production has a Director and whereas there is a Director for Livestock Services, you do not find a Director for Fisheries. At that level of senior management in the Ministry, those people are not represented. And due to the frustrations, the only Commissioner who was highly qualified in Fisheries has abandoned the Ministry and has gone to Lake Victoria Environmental Management Authority. That is a shame, because getting another civil servant of high calibre like that may take you some time’ (Hansard, 15 September 1999). Twice, within a relatively short time span, a commissioner has left his position in frustration. The second commissioner who left said when interviewed that he

was happy with the shift because in his new position at the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization he was more able to ‘make things happen’ (interviewed October 2009). In September, 2009, the shadow minister for agriculture questioned the ability of the DFR to manage the fisheries and argued the need for an audit. ‘The entire Fisheries Department needs a comprehensive investigation and audit; in fact, a commission of inquiry into the financial resource use and management, and agri-business financing’ (Hansard, 9 September 2009).

The low level of staffing makes patrolling and monitoring harder. But other functions such as acquiring information on the basis of which to adopt policy initiatives also become difficult. The analysis in the above showed that for a long time the DFR maintained that ‘the fish is there’ even though fish stocks were deteriorating. In addition, the analysis of aquaculture showed that research capacity to promote fish farming was inadequate.

Taken together, these cases are indicators of a sector that has, in the words of one of observer, been seriously neglected by the government, a neglect he considers a disaster, given that the sector provided large foreign exchange earnings to the government (private sector adviser, interviewed August 2010). The next section explores the reasons for the low prioritization of the fisheries sector by examining the capacity of the DFR and relating it to the coalitions and electoral pressures in the fisheries sector.

5. THE RULING COALITION, THE FISHERIES DEPARTMENT, AND INDUSTRY ACTORS

There are three overall factors that render the growth–stability trade-off in the fisheries sector quite steep. One is the political and eco-

conomic costs of implementing fisheries management to the ruling coalition, another is the interests and influence of the business sector, and the third is the fact that the ruling elite is not based in the fisheries constituencies.

Introducing a growth-enhancing institution, such as an efficient regulatory regime in fisheries, carries high costs. These costs should be measured in terms of both human and physical resources, such as negotiating with neighboring countries or investing in patrol boats. But there are also over one million voters living in Uganda's lake areas. These voters do not belong to what could be called secure constituencies, and their level of support for the NRM government is generally lower than in Museveni strongholds such as southwest Uganda. At the 2011 elections, for example, only 52 percent of the voters in fishing constituencies around Lake Victoria voted for the president, whereas the figure was over 90 percent in the south-western districts from where the president comes and 69 percent on average across the country (Uganda Electoral Commission, 2011). As was seen in the analysis above, cracking down on illegal fishing is unpopular, and politicians feel they have to help the fishermen avoid punishment in order to get re-elected. Successfully overcoming this resistance would imply initiatives to find alternative livelihoods in addition to sustained negotiations and interactions with fishing organizations, both of which would acquire considerable resources, as the fisheries sector is weakly organized, as we will show below.

Small-scale fishermen have for long vehemently opposed attempts to control the fisheries resources by fighting any punitive measures applied by government (interview, former commissioner of DFR). Several officers interviewed complain that impounding a boat because of illegal equipment or the

capture of fish below a certain minimum size can be difficult due to violent resistance on the part of the fishermen. Local politicians tend to support them since they know this is a way of gaining popularity. A district fisheries officer put it this way: 'You could arrest twenty people, but by the time you reached court there would be two people left because politicians intervene' (interviewed in October, 2009). Since a fisheries authority would result in a more stringent regulation of access to the fisheries, and since stringent management would mean losing votes, the incentive on the part of the ruling elite to push for such an authority has not been strong.

Another potential cost of setting up an authority is the resistance provided by the rest of MAAIF. MAAIF preferred a strengthened ministry rather than the removal of ministry functions to semi-autonomous bodies. Over the last two decades, there has been a process of removing a number of functions from MAAIF. There is now a Meat Authority and a Secretariat for the reform of Agricultural Services, for instance, which have taken over key responsibilities from the Ministry (interview, MAAIF official, March 2011). Internal differences between the DFR and the rest of MAAIF (including the Minister for Fisheries Resources) were therefore important in putting a halt to the setting up of the authority.

Another cost of implementing strict management is that it might hurt elements in the security forces who benefit from lax enforcement. The fact that the security forces are involved has been debated in parliament and even acknowledged by the Minister of Internal Affairs who wanted to investigate the role of the security forces. One MP representing a fishing constituency brought a bag of immature fish to a parliamentary session in order to attract attention to the problem of il-

legal fishing and the help the fishermen were receiving from the armed forces. Leaders of BMUs had been violently attacked trying to do their jobs.²⁶ Letting important clientele extract rents from their public-sector jobs has become one of the Museveni government's strategies for holding the ruling coalition together (Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2011). Other members of the ruling coalition may also have had short-term gains in terms of rents from the fishing industry which they would not want to let go of.

Finally, implementation of co-management strategies requires the cooperation of the fishermen, who, however, are weakly organized. With a lack of organization and of links to the fishermen, the costs of implementation increase. Fishermen are scattered throughout a large area, many of them living on small islands. Although one bureaucrat in the Department for Fisheries said there are no fishers' organizations, one organization for fishermen, AFALU (the Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda), is indeed being established. It is based near Kampala in the town of Mukono, was established in 2004 and has about 7,000 members (Interview with AFALU members, October, 2009). One Mukono fisheries officer says: 'AFALU is there and other local fisheries organizations. They have good intentions but they lack resources. We did not know them, we knew AFALU but it did not come up actively. The members of AFALU are the well-to-do fishermen. They have tried to recruit more, but they are still only somehow successful' (October 2009). UFPEA's general secretary says: 'The fishermen should be more organized. That would help. We invite them for meetings (e.g. AFALU from Mukono). but

there is no general fishermen's organization.' Although they are far from organizing all fishermen, AFALU petitioned the president with regard to an alleged closure of the lake.²⁷ The lake was never closed, and whether this was due to AFALU's intervention or simply to the fact that the 2011 elections were coming up and the president was afraid of losing the fishing communities' votes is hard to tell. It is clear, however, that it is hard for the fishermen to muster coalitional pressure on the political elite. The AFALU members had tried to get access to the president but felt this was indeed very difficult. At meetings they had discussed whether to mobilize funds (500,000 Ugandan shillings) to pay their local Regional District Commissioner to contact the President's half-brother Salim Saleh, who allegedly has an interest in fish and also access to the president. In all, the weak organization of the fishermen makes implementation of a fisheries strategy based on co-management much harder.

One problem is the cost of implementation. The other is that until the mid- or late 2000s there was no substantial organized pressure on the part of the processing industry for fisheries management (unlike the pressure that was mobilized in the case of sanitary standards). In the early 2000s the DFR, and in particular its commissioner, was the only strong proponent of the establishment of a fisheries authority. In fact, in 2003, the processing industry successfully lobbied the president to lift the ban, mentioned above, on fishing immature fish. The level of organization on the processors' side is much higher than on the producing side. The processors' organization, UFPEA,

²⁶ Hansard, 23 September 2008; *New Vision*, 24 September 2008.

²⁷ Interviews, but see also *The New Vision*, 'Fishermen seek Museveni's intervention over lake closure', Monday 10 August 2010.

interacts with all stakeholders in the fisheries sector and, as mentioned, consists of the companies that own factories along the Uganda shores of Lake Victoria (nine companies owning thirteen factories). During 2010, AFALU cooperated with UFPEA in persuading the government to set up a national task force including the police in order to be able to suppress illegal fishing. In that regard, UFPEA and its chairman have been in close interaction with the Fisheries Department. The task force is a partnership between the DFR, the police, the fishermen and the processors. The intention is to become better at patrolling in order to stop illegal fishing. Whether this initiative, taken in 2010, will work remains to be seen. Since the processors are struggling for survival, the task force initiative is driven primarily by them.

However, it was not always like that. The processors did not push for regulation of the fisheries at all until the very late 2000s. When the president lifted the ban on immature fishing in 2003, it was because the processors felt that, in order to satisfy European demand, they needed to export smaller fish fillets.²⁸ In other words, at the time the processors had not realized that the fish stocks were in decline. They had put pressure on the DFR to help them satisfy EU standards, but not to regulate. However, since the mid-2000s UFPEA has been in favor of the setting up of an authority, though this has still not happened (interview, general secretary). Other pressure to allow immature fish to be caught allegedly came from around Lake Albert (according to an MP from a Lake Albert constituency), where the people of Alur had wanted

to capture smaller fish, and this may have had an influence on the president's decision (MP, interviewed August 2011).

The combination of high costs for the ruling elite in terms of support and the lack of pressure from industry actors to manage the fisheries are the main explanations for why the fisheries authority was not established, and they are the main explanation for why resource management is not enforced. The Commissioner of the DFR had tried very hard to get the bill on the fisheries authority through cabinet, doing so at a time when the minister was out of the country, then taking the bill to cabinet. But the minister heard about this move, called from abroad and stopped the plans.²⁹

One final explanation for a weak fisheries management institution is that the ruling coalition is not based in fishing areas. Indeed, several interviewees indicated that the president has no interest in the sector and does not even eat fish himself. One researcher informed us that he had been asked by the presidential family to come up with a way to remove the taste from fish oil, because the president's father needed the ingredients of fish oil but did not like the taste (interview, March 2011). So he had come up with a way to remove the taste by filtering the fish oil through alcohol without taking away the nutrients.

Summing up, implementing regulation in the fisheries sector is costly in a very direct way in that ways of extracting rents would be removed, whereas the lack of implementation reduces foreign exchange earnings but does not threaten power-holders in any immediate way.

²⁸ *New Vision*, 'Immature fish under siege', 9 December 2003; UFPEA chairman, personal communication, August 2011.

²⁹ Interview, former DFR employee, August 2010.

6. CONCLUSION

The fisheries sector was for a number of years the second largest foreign exchange earner in Uganda, and in 2004 almost overtook coffee in terms of the value of exports (Uganda Export Promotion Board). Given this fact, it is striking that in the same year, the then Minister of State for Fisheries, Mr Byaruhanga, could call fish in parliament ‘a topic that is quite often forgotten’ (Hansard, 19 February 2004). The sector has suffered from long periods of neglect and then sudden interventions, as when there was a crisis due to the European ban on fish imports, or when there was extraordinary pressure to lift a ban on immature fishing.

An export success was established but not sustained. Through our analytical framework, we can understand the success: the costs of implementing tests and employing inspectors for hygienic landing sites were relatively low, and no important groups resisted it. In addition, donor funds were available, and there was substantial pressure from the industry (the processing factories), from the donors and from the promise of foreign exchange earnings to reform so that Uganda could live up to European standards requirements.

However, the sector also illustrates what often happens when the ruling coalition is fragmented and the ruling elite needs to extract rents in order to keep itself together: implementing policies that would help to ensure a sustainable fisheries industry in the long term carries with it short-term political costs that make it more difficult for the political elite to remain in power. Costs are high because politically important coalitions and groups benefit from the status quo. Members of the security forces make gains from illegal fishing, and their support might be lost if enforcement were strict. The approximately

one million voters living in fishing communities do not belong to Movement strongholds, which means that their votes cannot be taken for granted. This makes cracking down on fishermen’s illegal fishing even harder. Finally, the processing industry realized very late that the lake was being depleted of fish and therefore did not exert pressure on the government to do something about fisheries resource management. In the future this might change, as there is an increasing awareness of this in the industry and therefore also increased pressure on the government.

This understanding of the failure of enforcement represents a deeper understanding of the factors that influence policy implementation than simply referring to the broad category of neopatrimonialism, which fails to distinguish between different sectors or changes within sectors over time. Likewise, referring to a lack of political will or a lack of capacity does not help give us a deeper understanding of the interests at stake. We need to understand the nature of the ruling coalition and its relation to the productive sector in question when we want to explain Policies, Implementation and Results in that particular sector.

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