Successful Handover of two Modern Integrated Landing Sites with Cold Rooms and Ice Making Machines in Eastern D.R Congo

The Regional Military Administrators in charge of Benni and Rutshuru Territories of Eastern D.R Congo on 9th and 11th August respectively presided over the handing over of completed and fully functional cold rooms and ice making machines at the modern integrated fish landing sites of Kyavinyonge (in Benni Territory) and Vitshumbi (in Rutshuru Territory).

Each cold room has capacity of 40 cubic meters while the ice block and ice chips machines can make up to one ton of ice per day. When used for packaging fish, the ice can keep fish fresh in transit for up to 12 hours ensuring that traders supply fresh fish to far away towns of Butembo, Benni, Kiwanja and even Goma and still get the best prices.

Rwenshama Modern Integrated Fish Landing Site in Uganda Now Complete and in Full Operation

A year ago, Rwenshama, a landing site on the shores of Lake Edward, Uganda, was just like any other village landing site - boats all over the many landing spots on the lake shore, fishermen and brokers huddled besides the boats spread across the lake shores in the hot sun, with hordes of onlookers watching the spectacle of price negotiations. Piles of fish could be seen, either on a sack or spread on the sandy ground. At that time, the modern integrated landing site was still under construction. We interviewed the Resident District Commissioner of Rukungiri back then and he said, “This is the only... continued p.2
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Each of the two landing sites has a cold room, an ice block making machine, a fish market, a fish store, an unloading shed, offices for co-management team-one for the Fisheries Officers and another for the Marines and a hygienic fish salting and drying area.

“I am extremely impressed with these fish handling facilities and I am giving an order today, that any fisher caught handling fish in the sand and bushes outside while we have a proper modern landing site here, will be fined up to 15,000 CDF (7.5 USD)” said Colonel Ehuta Omeonga the Military Administrator in charge of Benni Territory, while handing over the facilities. Colonel Ehuta directed local authorities to implement the directive with immediate effect. A similar directive was issued by the Military Administrator in charge of Rutshuru Territory, Colonel Bakole Nyengele Luc, as he also handed over the Vitshumbi Landing Site. Speaking after the handing over, the Secretary General of Fishers Committees of Lake Edward (FECOPEILE) Mr. Kambasu Katsuva Mukura Josué said, “As a fellow fisherman, I am very pleased with the cold rooms and ice making machines because previously whenever the fish catch on the lake rose, its prices would tumble due to ‘panic selling,’ as a result of lack of storage, but now fishers and traders can store unsold fish in the cold rooms until they get better prices.” “The ice-chips and ice blocks will ensure fish arrives in the market fresh, and will fetch higher prices since demand for fresh fish is higher than for smoked, dried or deep-fried fish,” Mr. Kambasu added. The Military Administrators also presided over public election of committee members to be in-charge of the day to day running of the facilities on behalf of the communities. The sites are currently under a user-acceptability test before final remedial repairs are done prior to their definitive hand over. Two similar fish infrastructures have been constructed on Lake Albert, in Tchonya and Mahagi port landing sites. The sites were constructed through the LEAF II Project, Governments of D.R Congo, Uganda and NELSAP/NBI, with financing from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Nine landing sites have been constructed around Lakes Edward and Albert in both D.R Congo and Uganda. At Kyavinyonge Landing site, the Military Administrator of Benni Territory also handed over a renovated 400-people capacity Meeting Hall and a three bedroom Guest House that were renovated by the D.R Congo LEAF II team. “This meeting hall and guest house will be available for hire and will be managed by the elected management committee and the Virunga Fisheries Cooperative, COPEVI respectively,” Mr. Joseph Masirika Matunguru, the National LEAF II Coordinator for D.R Congo said.

Editor’s Note: With Presidential and Parliamentary approval, since May 6th 2021, Provincial Military Governors temporarily replaced Provincial Government and elected representatives in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces in order to manage the security situation in the two provinces.
Rwenshama Landing Site Operational...

landing site serving the entire Rukungiri District, and when it will be completed, cleanliness and sanitation of fish from Rwenshama will change, and our fish will be able to compete at national and even at the global level,” The Commissioner spoke in February 2020,”

By June 2021, the landing site had undergone complete transformation. The modern fish landing and processing facility was complete and in use. The solar powered potable water supply system, and the ‘ecosan’ sanitation facility were also complete. And so was the administration block which houses the Fisheries Officer as well as the Fisheries Protection Unit. Two privately run mobile money kiosks had opened shop inside the facility to take advantage of the booming commercial activities taking place at the landing site. “The only facilities not yet in use are the sun drying facilities and modern fish smoking kilns, which will be operational soon,” Mr. Richard Rugadya, the National Fisheries Officer for the project in Uganda explained.

“Since this landing site was completed, the prices, standards and quality of fish from Rwenshama has greatly improved, and our fish now competes well in the national market” says Musinguzi Robert. Robert has been a fish trader at the landing site for the past 18 years.

“Before this landing site was constructed, we used to suffer especially during rainy and sunny days,” says Hellen Kakwanzi. Hellen has been a fish trader at the site for the past 20 years. “However now I feel great because we work in a good healthy environment with clean running water and as a result, when we go to the market, our fish is preferred because it doesn’t have sand or mud,” she explains. Hellen purchases and resells 25 kilograms of fish every day.

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How Rwenshama Landing Site is Managed

The local government (LC1) and the Fisheries Office helped the community to develop acceptable management practices, to agree on user fees and to hold elections of a management committee of seven. The committee works under the local government, represented by the sub-county Chief, the Parish Chief and the sub-county Fisheries Officer.

According to Mr. Edward Twongyeirwe, chair of the management committee, the facility serves 15 registered fish traders, 50 brokers, 60 licensed boat owners and 10 wheelbarrow pushers daily.

All these user groups pay an agreed user fee per month. Currently for example fish traders pay USD 3 (10,000 UGX) while brokers pay USD 2.5 (9,000 UGX). “The user fees gives the facility about (USD 203) 700,000 UGX per month which is banked in a Savings and Credit Organization (SACCO) and later used to pay our four full time employees and purchase cleaning supplies,” Mr. Twongyeirwe explained.
14.5 MW Transboundary Akanyaru Project to commence soon - Rwanda Approves MoU on Technical Cooperation, Burundi Prepares for the same

The 14.5 MW transboundary Akanyaru multipurpose project on the Akanyaru River, shared between Burundi and Rwanda is expected to commence this year after the Rwandan government cleared the MoU for Technical Cooperation on the Development and Implementation of the project. The Burundian Government has confirmed that it will soon place the MoU before its Cabinet for approval, paving way for grant processing by the African Development Bank (AfDB). Hon. Déo-Guide Rurema, the Burundian Minister for Environment, Irrigation and Livestock made the pledge on 20th August 2021 as he received a delegation from NELSAP-CU led by the Regional Coordinator Eng. Maro Andy Tola in Bujumbura. Also present at the meeting were Dr. Nyorobeka Felicien, the D.G for Environment and Water Resources of Burundi and Mr. Dodiko Prosper, the D.G for Planning for Environment and Agriculture.

During the meeting, Burundi requested NELSAP-CU to organize a working session of Government Officials from the two countries to jointly review the MoU on Technical Cooperation and have it ready for joint Ministerial signature. After the MoU is signed, NELSAP-CU will present it to the AfDB, under the New Partnership for African Development - Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF) and the African Water Facility (AWF) for project grant processing. Burundi also requested NELSAP-CU to organize a working tour of government officials of Burundi including the Ministers Responsible for Water Affairs of both countries to the 80MW Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project in order for them to appreciate the benefits of successful NELSAP-CU coordination.

The Akanyaru project – coordinated by NELSAP – is over 80% complete. The Akanyaru project comprises a 52m high dam with storage capacity of 333 million cubic metres that will supply water to 614,200 people and irrigate 12,474 Ha, directly benefitting 24,948 farmers and provide food for about 124,740 people. It will also generate 14.5 MW hydropower which will supply power to about 141,111 houses and serve over 846,000 people. The project will also contribute to restoration of 1700km2 degraded watersheds upstream of the dam and reservoir area in both Burundi and Rwanda sides. The AfDB (NEPAD-IPPF) and AWF committed to co-finance project preparation for a total of USD 2.3 million. The preparation includes full feasibility, detailed design and preparation of tender documents, as well as Independent Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) studies. The bank requires the Government of Burundi and Rwanda to commit counterpart funding of 10% of the total grant of 2.3 million, which is USD 230,000 (USD 115,000 for each country).

Project History

Burundi and Rwanda, NELSAP-CU undertook detailed identification studies the same year through a Sweden-Norway grant after which the project was ranked as national priority by both countries. The project is on Akanyaru River which defines the border between the Southern Province of Rwanda and Ngozi Province in Burundi. The proposed dam’s left abutment is at Nyabiryo Village, of Gisagara District of Rwanda, while the right abutment is located at Musezero Village in Ngozi Province of Burundi.
Second Joint Regional Patrols by D.R Congo and Uganda on Lakes Edward and Albert following a Successful First Ever Joint Patrols that Nabbed 20,000 Illegal Gears

A second set of joint regional patrols to mitigate illegalities on the trans-boundary Lakes Edward and Albert were done in August 2021 after the two neighboring countries, D.R Congo and Uganda met and signed Joint Communiques on the modus operandi of the patrols. This came four months after the extremely successful first ever joint patrols that nabbed over 20,000 illegal gears and exchanged 237 illegal fishers.

D.R Congo and Uganda met in D.R Congo’s Mahagi town (Ituri Province) and at Kyavinyonge (North Kivu Province) on the 3rd and 9th of August respectively for the regional entry meetings where rules of engagement and implementation modalities were discussed and agreed upon. The head of the D.R Congo delegation in the Kyavinyonge meeting was Admiral Egide Ngoy John, Commander of the 33rd Naval Force responsible for security on Lakes Edward, Albert and Kivu; whilst the delegation to the Mahagi meeting was led by Mr. Jimmy Banga Ryme, Adviser to H.E. the Military Governor of Ituri Province, in charge of Security and Good Governance. For both regional meetings, the Ugandan delegations were led by Lt. Colonel Dickson Kiirya Kajja, Head of the Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU).

Speaking at the Kyavinyonge, Admiral Egide Ngoy stated that, D.R Congo and Uganda had recorded a steep decline in illegalities since the first joint patrols conducted in March 2021 and said the patrols will lead to fishers getting bigger fish catch.

“These joint regional patrols being carried are a gift for the present and future generations, and they will remember this team that fought for protection and sensible fishing of existing species in the two lakes,” Admiral Egide added.

On his part, Uganda’s Col. Dick Kajja said, “Without LEAF II, these joint bilateral meetings and patrols might not have taken place.” I am optimistic that the patrols will further enhance confidence, coordination and cooperation between the two countries, for the benefit of the common fishers,” he added. Uganda reported that they were internally consulting and researching on suspension of solar lights for fishing and on instituting mandatory closed fishing seasons on Lake Albert, as is being practiced in the D.R Congo.

The two countries agreed on modalities of the joint patrols including dates and times, areas to be patrolled, a multi-lingual communication command channel through which direct communication and information exchange would take place. They further agreed on handling of illegal gears and illegal fishers arrested in each other’s waters, collection and processing points for illegalities, exchange of confiscated engines and boats in accordance the national laws of each country, as well as dates for the exit meetings to take stock and compare notes on the operation.

The Secretary General of the Fishers Committees of Lake Edward (FECOPEILE) Mr. Kambasu Katsuva Mukura Josué on his part said, “As fishers we fully support the patrols, because through them we will get more fish, especially if we protect the fish breeding and spawn areas.” “This Lake (Edward) is a gift to us from God, a God-given bank that we must protect and care for well and in return it will feed us and our future generations,” Mr. Kambasu added.

The joint regional patrols are supported by the LEAF II Project of NELSAP-CU/NBI in collaboration with LEAF II national units in D.R Congo and Uganda and are financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

At the start of the exercise, both countries exchanged foreign illegal fishers held in their respective jails.
The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) took over rotating leadership of the Nile Equatorial Lakes Council of Ministers (NELCOM) from Ethiopia, for the next one year during the 24th annual NELCOM meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the end of June 2021. Receiving the mandate on behalf of D.R Congo, Vice Prime Minister Hon. Eve Bazaiba Masudi, who is also the country’s Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development said that her country has committed to come back to the African brotherhood as an active member of NELSAP/NBI. The Hon. Vice Prime Minister said that her country places high importance on NELSAP/NBI and also supports sustainable socio-economic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources.

"On the instructions of the President of the D.R Congo, H.E Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, who is the Chairman of the African Union, I was sent to participate in this NELCOM, and to express commitment of my government to objectives of NELSAP/NBI," Vice Prime Minister stated.

“In the recent past, D.R Congo has not been appearing in the NELSAP governance meetings due to some internal challenges, however, we are now back fully,” the Hon. Vice Prime Minister explained. She commended the solidarity and patience of other member states and noted that despite D.R Congo’s absence, her country and its people continued to benefit from very important projects from NELSAP/NBI, projects which she said respond to the objectives of Africa Union’s Agenda 2063. The Hon. Vice Prime Minister spoke in the presence of other members of the Council of Ministers including the host Hon. Dr. Eng. Seleshi Bekele, Ethiopia Minister for Water, Irrigation and Energy Affairs who is the outgoing NELCOM chair. Others present were Hon. Prof. Yasir Abbas Mohammed, Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources of the Sudan, Hon. Maryprisca Mahundi (MP) Deputy Minister of Water for Tanzania. Also with them are the NELTAC members of various Nile Basin countries and regional Coordinator of NELSAP Eng. Maro Andy Tola.

The outgoing NELCOM Chair Hon. Dr. Eng. Seleshi Bekele applauded NELSAP governance and coordination unit for the achievements recorded during the fiscal year 2020-2021. The progress made by NELSAP is commendable especially during this difficult time of Covid-19." The Hon. Minister cited progress of construction progress of the 80MW Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project (RRFHP) which was about 80% complete at the end of June 2021. The Hon. Minister stated that Rusumo project shareholders - the Governments of the Republic of Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania, together with NELSAP-CU and development partner the World Bank, were working to speed up completion of the project. Hon. Bekele noted that studies for power interconnections projects and water resources projects were advancing well as well as important resources mobilization with the World Bank CIWA, AfDB, NEPAD among others.

The Council of Ministers (NELCOM) is the highest policy and decision making organ that guides the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP-CU). In an event preceding the Council of Ministers meeting, the Technical Advisory arm of NELSAP, The Nile Equatorial Lakes Technical Advisory Committee (NELTAC) also held its 35th meeting where it, among others, approved NELSAP-CU work plan and budget for the year 2021-2022. D.R Congo also took over rotating leadership of NELTAC from Ethiopia.
What connection can there be, between a normal smart mobile phone and an increase in quality and quantity of fish catch from a lake? Well, on the transboundary Lakes Edward and Albert, between D.R Congo and Uganda, the two are very closely interlinked. This is because the LEAF II Project is pioneering a largely mobile-based Fisheries Management Information System that will enable continuous Catch Assessment Survey (CAS) for the two lakes.

How the System Will Work

At the centre of this is a locally developed, cloud-based application available for download on Google Play. Through it, local fishers and their officials, based at various landing sites, armed with just a phone and some airtime (data) can regularly collect information at their normal working areas and this is transmitted to a central database accessible to both countries and anyone else online.

“From the database, the two countries will monitor quantity of fish caught, fish sizes, species, boat and fishing gear types per landing site and generally monitor status of health of the two lakes,” said Eng. Jacques Kapagama, a Fisheries Statistics Expert in the D.R Congo Fisheries Ministry. The system can immediately summarize and produce information in form of graphs and excel sheets, available to fisheries officials and to the public. The information system has been developed by a team from both countries led by Mr. Isaac Omiat, an IT expert at the Ministry of Fisheries of Uganda and Mr. Daddy Tshivombo an IT expert from the D.R Congo Ministry of Fisheries. The D.R Congo experts provided the database to run the system while the Ugandan expert developed its website, software and operating system.

“This system is very important because before the LEAF II project, D.R Congo had never conducted any Catch Assessment Survey (CAS) on its lakes due to financial resources constraints,” explains Eng. Jacques Kapagama. LEAF II enabled D.R Congo to organize the first standardized CAS in the two lakes and trained enumerators and supervisors who, using this system, will collect data on a permanent basis on the course of their regular duties. On his part, the Governor of Ituri Province H.E Jean Bamanisa Saidi and his Minister for Fisheries Affairs, Hon. Guerchole Dramani commended LEAF II for supporting D.R Congo, and said information generated through the system will support their government’s decision making. The two spoke during a briefing session at H.E the Governor’s offices in Bunia, on 9th February 2021.

“The system is multi-lingual (French and English) and operates online and offline and as data is entered, it is saved, so any error at any stage can be corrected without losing already entered data,” Mr. Omiat the System Developer explained. The enumerators will be provided with airtime and access codes, generated by fisheries officials and systems administrators from their respective countries.

“I prefer this system because once I input information, it transmits immediately and my work is complete, and even if am in a place with poor network coverage, information remains in my phone and later transmits on its own,” explains Mr. Kakura Unjoka Jean-Henri, one of the local enumerators who has been trained for this activity. On a normal day, Mr. Kakura is a landing site community health monitor (chief de sante) and his regular job is to inspect fish handling at Tambaki area of Tchomya landing site on Lake Albert (D.R Congo).

“Costs of conducting standard CAS are very high, hence most African countries rarely conduct them, furthermore, national budget allocations to fisheries research activities are often meagre, which affects the quality and reliability of fisheries information,” explains Mr. Godfrey Sengendo, the Regional Project Coordinator for LEAF II. Once completed, the system will be handed over to the two countries for maintenance beyond the LEAF II project.
Kenya and Uganda Finally Settle on Exact Location of The Angololo Dam

Kenya and Uganda have finally settled on the exact location of the Angololo Dam which will be built on the transboundary Sio-Malaba-Malakisi River. The left bank of the dam will be at Kapesur in Busia County of Kenya while the right bank will be at Osimit in Tororo / Manafwa in Uganda, approximately 45 kilometres from Busia town and 30 kilometers from Tororo. The dam will have a 43.0 million cubic meters water reservoir which will supply water to 20,000 people and irrigate 3,300ha.

“The location was selected because it is the most cost effective in actual construction costs, reservoir operation and water supply reliability and provides maximum returns – it gives us maximum irrigation command area (1,433ha for Uganda and 1,687ha for Kenya) and has the least relocation needs since it is sparsely populated,” said Eng. Panos Antonaropoulos the Angololo Project Consultancy Team Leader and Managing Director of Z&A Consulting Engineers Limited which alongside Beta Studio are the two firms contracted by NELSAP, with funding from the African Development Bank (AfDB) to conduct the Full Feasibility studies including the preparation of the Detailed Designs and Tender Documents. The site selection was done during a series of forums held in Kenya and Uganda at the end of August 2021 by members of the Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC), Dam Safety Panel of Experts, Inter-ministerial team of Joint Technical Peer Reviewers and community representatives from both countries. The forums included physical site visits to the final two locations before the selection, community dialogue, Technical Peer Review meetings and presentation to stakeholders the various feasibility reports by the consultants. The reports include findings on Water Resources and Irrigation, Socio-Economic, Environmental Issues, Economic Assessment of the project and Dam Location and Design.

Kenyan delegation to the forums was led by the Director of Trans boundary Waters Ms. Gladys Wekesa who was represented by Mr. Chrispine Juma, the Director of Water Resources of Kenya and the Governor of Busia County Hon. Sospeter Ojaamong, represented by the Deputy Governor Mr. Moses Mulomi. Ugandan delegation was led by the Director of Trans boundary Waters Dr. Florence Grace Adongo, who was represented by the Commissioner for International and Transboundary Water Affairs, Mr. Sowed Sewagudde.

“I would like to thank NELSAP for resource mobilizing for this project, which will help in reducing food and energy needs in the two countries, and will promote regional cooperation,” said the Governor of Busia County Hon. Sospeter Ojaamong, in a speech read on his behalf by his deputy.

According to the Hydrology Report, the river has annual average inflow of 261.6 million cubic meters which by far surpasses the project water demands of 25.6 million cubic meters per year for irrigation and 1.9 million cubic meters per year for domestic water supply and livestock use.

Next Steps

Following the site selection, the consultants will conduct detailed design and tender documents preparation that will include Bill of Quantities and this will be completed in five months’ time. An independent consultant has begun conducting the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) and Compensation Framework, and this will be completed in April 2022. In addition, an Environmental Impact assessment will commence late September and will conclude by April 2022.