
Implementing Agency	World Bank
Country	Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda
Focal Area	International Waters
Project Title	Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project
GEF Allocation	US\$35.0 million
Cofinancing	US\$42.6 million
	US\$7.6 million (Governments of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda)
	US\$35 million (International Development Association)
Total Financing	US\$77.6 million
Dates	July 1996–December 2002
Environmental Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large freshwater body with unique biodiversity and economic importance threatened by pollution, overexploitation of resources, and invasive species
Project Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin program to monitor water quality, control water hyacinths, and manage fisheries, wetlands, land use

Lake Victoria in East Africa is the world's second largest body of freshwater. Its 3,500-kilometer, convoluted shoreline creates innumerable small, shallow bays and inlets with swamps and wetlands. Biologists are intensely interested in the lake's fish, especially its cichlids, which are capable of rapid genetic change and more prone to speciation than other African fish.

The lake and surrounding areas are of enormous economic importance to some 25 million people. The lake's water catchment supports an agricultural and subsistence fishing economy, which produce important agricultural exports—coffee and tea. Environmental quality of the lake and catchment are, therefore, fundamental to maintaining and increasing the living standards of growing populations in the region.

Heavy human demands on the lake have caused the lake to undergo substantial and sometimes alarming changes in the past three decades. These include massive algae blooms, increased frequency of waterborne diseases, water hyacinth infestations, and overfishing and oxygen depletion at lower lake depths, threatening fisheries and biodiversity. The consequences are potentially irreversible environmental damage, hardship to the poor, and serious health concerns. With poverty endemic to the region and many competing claims for scarce development resources, GEF support is critical to correcting the situation.

The Project This project is the first phase of a long-term, comprehensive program prepared jointly by the three governments. The broad program is intended to rehabilitate the lake ecosystem for the benefit of the people who live in the catchment, the national economies of which they are a part, and the global community. The program is working to (a) maximize sustainable benefits to riparian communities in using resources of the basin to generate food, employment and income; supply safe water; and sustain a disease-free environment, (b) conserve biodiversity and genetic resources for the benefit of riparian and global communities, and (c)

harmonize national management programs to try to reverse environmental degradation. The first phase is providing information necessary to improve management of the lake ecosystem, establishing mechanisms for cooperative management by the three countries, and identifying and demonstrating practical, self-sustaining remedies, while building capacity for ecosystem management.

Activities Activities in priority pilot zones addressing specific environmental threats in an integrated manner include (a) conserve and sustainably develop wetlands, (b) reduce sediment and nutrient flow, especially phosphorus, into the lake, (c) regulate industrial effluent, define current contamination of fish and prevent any increase, (d) stabilize the catch of Nile perch and increase catch of indigenous species, (e) increase incomes of local fishers, and (f) reduce water hyacinths to manageable levels. Lakewide, regionally managed activities are improving technical information and building capacity for more effective management by working to (a) assess and measure sources of nutrients causing eutrophication, (b) measure fisheries-trophic state interactions, (c) model and monitor lake circulation, (d) define and measure the contaminant threat, (e) harmonize regulation and legislation, (f) monitor recovery and impact, and (g) build institutional capacity.

- Benefits**
- Conserve biodiversity and stabilize fisheries and raise productivity and quality of wetlands and other areas
 - Improve water quality at lower cost
 - Diminish incidence of disease in riparian communities

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism that provides grants and concessional funds to developing countries for projects and activities designed to protect the global environment. GEF resources address climate change, biological diversity, international waters, and depletion of the ozone layer. Activities concerning land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation as they relate to the four focal areas, are also eligible for funding.

GEF is a joint venture of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank. These three agencies implement GEF projects.

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