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The Status of lake wamala callS for attention;

Over view .

Lake Wamala is a small fresh water lake located in central Uganda , 60km south west of kamapla city . It is shared by three districts of Mubende, Mityana and Gomba, with the biggest part of the lake in Mityana District . it covers an estimated area of 250sqkm(97sqmiles) and is doted by many islands namely Mabo, Bgwe, KirazaKazinga, Lwanju among many others .

Mityana District has approximately 523.12 hectares of its land area occupied by wet lands (swamps). This represent 3.5% coverage of the district's land surface area . Permanent wet lands cover 273.6 hectares while seasonal wetlands cover 250.1 ha which drain in Lake Wamala. The lake is associated with several rivers and wetlands . The rivers, Nyanzi, Kitenga,Kabasuma,Mpamujugu Nakitongoli, Wakitundu, Musamya Mpongo and Bbimbye flow in lake Wamala whereas river Kibimba drains towards Lake Victoria. River katonga into lake Wamala.

Lake Wamala consists mostly of permanently flooded papyrus, grass swamps and swamp forests . The contribution of the wetland along Lake Wamala is increasingly being recognized in such aspects as water storage , flood impact reduction , flow regulation, ground water recharge, water quality protection and purification, drinking water supply and storage , erosion and sediments control, waste water treatment , wild life and habitat function including the provision of breeding environment for fish. There is concern that wetland along Lake Wamala is increasingly being destroyed or converted into other land uses. The main drivers of this conversion process are the rapidly growing population that is still predominately rural and agricultural, as well as indirect pressure such as ignorance of the law , political interventions and week enforcement mechanism all of which are affecting the Fauna and Flora .

The lake is of intrest and immediate concern to the District of Gomba, and Mubende because of it lieing in each of the three intersecting administrative units of central Uganda.

Due to its relative small size compared to other lakes in Uganda and the decimal fisheries output over the years. Lake Wamala is increasingly being neglected and ingnored by the authorities and consequently loosing its glory.

HISTORY.

More than 4,000 years ago lake Wamala was part of Lake Victoria , but since receded to its current state . the name "Wamala" originated from Uganda's history . Wamala was the name of the last Muchwzi King who lived in the 12 century during the reign of the Bachwezi dynasty which founded the kitara territory of Bunyoro, Ankole and Buganda of Uganda , parts of Northern Tanzania, Western Kenya and Eastern Congo Basin in the Bronze Age. It is belived that the king disappeared into Lake Wamala at a site near Lubajja fishing village called Nakyegalika and his spirit reside in the lake. Hence people from all walks of life as far as Kampala and beyond frequently visit this site to perform rituals , at Nakyegalika-one of the spiritual sites where Buganda Kings performed rituals to appease spirits. There is a cave of cultural significance that is overseen by the lugave totem, one of Buganda's major cultural.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The vegetation surrounding Lake Wamala is dominated by papyrus used for crafts,reeds for construction , medicinal plants ,other spectacular floaters and water based vegetation . There are also trees such as Rhapia and palms. There used to be wild animals such as; statungas, wildpigs ,hippopotamus, bush bucks, water bucks ,velvet monkeys Baboonsand variety of birds such as guienea fowls, water ducks, white egrates and turacos . A diversity or water based birds are visible in the remaining wetlands. The existing and surviving fish spices include tilapia,catfish,and lungfish.

Conclusion

Lake Wamala experienced shrinking and recovery of water levels in the late 1950's,1990,1997 and early 1998. While recovery has gradually been resuscitated it has not reached its original levels of (250sqkm) .

Currently its water volume varies from 100 to 180sqkm depending on the rainfall regimes creating fears that this lake may be drying up. In addition, there are strongly conceived beliefs within Buganda superstitionsly attributed to the total disregard of the Buganda cultural issues related to the use and proper management of the Lake Wamala .

Status of fisheries industry on Lake Wamala

Introduction:

Landing sites:

Mityana district has 12 landing sites on Lake Wamala, with five in Busimbi and seven in Maanyi. The ones in Busimbi are Butebi, Bukanaga, Nkonya, Katiko and Ggombe while those in Maanyi are Lusaalira, Buzibazzi, Mawanga, Lubajja A and Lubajja B, Kalyankoko, Kimuli. The most active of these landing sites are Lusaalira, Katiko, Butebi, Lubajja A, Lubajja B.

Fish species in Lake Wamala:

Traditionally, the lake is well known for production of African cat fish or *Clarias gariepinus* (Mmale) and African mud fish or *Protopterus aethiopicus aethiopicus* (mmamba). In the early 50's there was introduction of Tilapia or *Orhiocromis nilotica* and *Nilotica zilli* (engege) to make the commercial species be three. However, there are other fish species such as Nkejje and Nsonzi which are not commercial.

Fisher folk on Lake Wamala use two major types of fishing, ie, use of a long line and use of gillnets. The boats used for fishing are the small ones commonly known as 'Baawotaatu'. (made of three timbiers) The legally accepted size of hooks 8' or less while that of nets is 4.5 and above. Nets are also two fold, the gauze gillnets and monofilament gillnets. The later is highly detrimental and highly discouraged since it is normally used in the breeding grounds of the fish leading to a depletion in the stocks in a very short period. However, even the gauze gillnets are dangerous if inappropriate sizes are used.

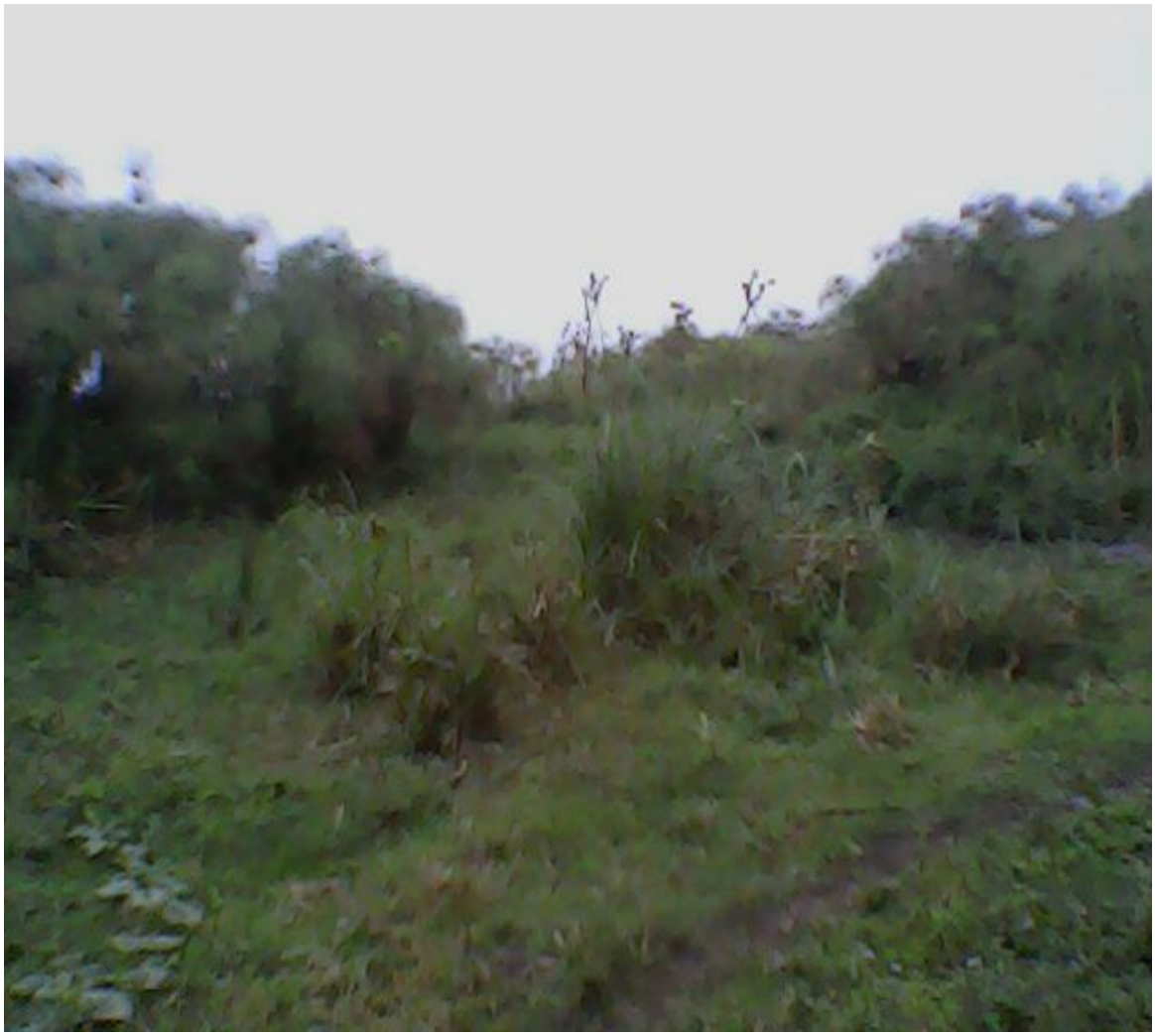
Currently, the catches are very poor due to persistent fishing malpractices, resulting from weak law regulations and enforcement mechanisms.

Handling of fish after capture:

Fish is handled locally after capture. Some of the fish is sold in the waters before landing but upon landing they are pulled on the grass, some times washed or not, an if washed the community uses dirty water.

The lake has a great challenge of suds that keep floating on the waters and are carried by wind, and keep carrying away fisher's gears and destroy boats. Because of the effect of

suds, the landing sites of Nkonya, Bukanaga and Gombe, to mention but a few have become inaccessible and are almost no more. Below is a photograph of the look of Nkonya landing site, which used to be one of the biggest landing sites, with very many fishermen and fetching good revenue for the sub county .



The community however improvised and got an alternative landing shown in the photo graph:

But as it appears, it is likely to get blocked also since there is a stamp that is holding the suds and that will make it stick.

Some of the challenges faced by the community is culvating to the edge of the lake causing siltation and suds building as is seen in the photographs below:

Growing such crops let to the creation of suds on the lake since it leads to breakage of the sunstratum which weakens.

A garden of cassava inter cropped with yams at Bukanaga landing site

A tree plantation at Gombe landing site, where boats used to land.

Way forward:

Some of the issues considered to reclaim both the land and lake are:

Sensitization of the community, targeting specifically the fishers on issues of the fish in the lake and land lords boardering the lake to ensure that they avoid cultivating up to lake level;

Liaising with the community and NGO's who can provide tree seedlings so that the community plants them along the shores of the lake, there by reducing the further opening of the lake substratum;

Restocking the lake with fingerlings and enforce the law seriously;

Promoting fish farming like the one below to reduce fishing pressure on the lake.

Current land use activitie on Lake Wamala.

Fishing, Cultivation, Sand excuvation, Brick making,graizing,human settlement, hunting.

Disturbance / threats

Over fishing ,Deforestation,Bush burning, Land clearance,exposed pits left after sand and clay mining, solid wastedisposal,construction of buildings , rapid increase of population, over use of pestcide along lake, use of poor gill nets less than 4inch.

Social cultural values

Herbal medicines , timbe,firewood watering animals,domestic water,bricks,sand,fishing ,charchola burning alon islands and lake, crafts,food source and transport.

Conservation measearure taken

- Tree planting.

- Senstaization of communities about sustainable lake utilization.
- Community project (organic vegetable growing / beekeeping)

Proposed conservation measures but not yet put in place.

- Formation of lake user groups in communities and schools.
- Senstizating schools around the lake.
- Start and Updating the inventory of Founa and Flora around lake wamala .
- Start up fish ponds reduce on pressure of lake wamala.
- Strat up breeding sites around the lake in collaboration with MAIF and Disrict
- Start up community projects like fruit growing, vegetable growing . beekeeping to reduce pressure on the lake.
- Community come up with sesonal fishing to leave the lake rest and regenerate fish .

The solutions are with you . start know