

TANGANYIKA – ANCIENT AND UNIQUE GREAT LAKE TREASURE ... AT RISK



A multilateral partnership is mobilising for urgent action in order to address an array of problems now threatening the Lake Tanganyika Basin ecosystem and the livelihoods of millions of its inhabitants. This prospectus invites concerned agencies to join local, national and international stakeholders in promoting the partnership.

Cradled within the Western Rift Valley between the countries of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Zambia, Lake Tanganyika is in many ways a most remarkable feature of the African continent, and indeed of the world. It is:

- the longest lake in the world;
- the second largest (by area) of all African lakes (after Lake Victoria), and the fifth largest of the world’s lakes;
- the deepest of all African lakes and the second deepest lake (after Baikal) in the world;
- the greatest single reservoir (by volume) of fresh water on the continent and one of the greatest in the world; and
- one of the most bio-diverse fresh water ecosystems on the planet.

The lake also plays a crucial role in sustaining human welfare and livelihoods.

- It hosts one of the largest inland fisheries in Africa (second only to Lake Victoria), and therefore provides a significant source of food security and livelihood for millions dwelling within and around its basin. Estimated annual harvest levels in recent years vary from 165 000 to 200 000 mt, yielding annual earnings reckoned at between US\$80 – 100 million.
- In addition to its fisherfolk, the lake directly or indirectly provides income, food, drinking water, and a means of transport and communication

Lake Tanganyika profile:

Altitude:	773 m
Length:	670 km
Size:	32 900 km ²
Maximum depth:	1 470 m
Volume:	18 880 km ³ (about 1/6 of global reserves of free standing fresh water)
Shore perimeter:	9% in Burundi, 43% in D.R. Congo, 36% in Tanzania, and 12% in Zambia.
Catchment area:	220 000 km ²
Biodiversity:	>2 000 species of plants and animals, half of these endemic to the Tanganyika Basin.

for an estimated 10 million inhabitants of its catchment area.

- Many more millions residing within the wider trading orbit of the Tanganyika Basin are regular or occasional beneficiaries of its resources as consumers of fishery products. In many communities fish is the single most important source of animal protein.

Inland market for Tanganyika fish, Zambia



M.V. Liemba off-loading fish to cargo boats



Smoked fish for sale

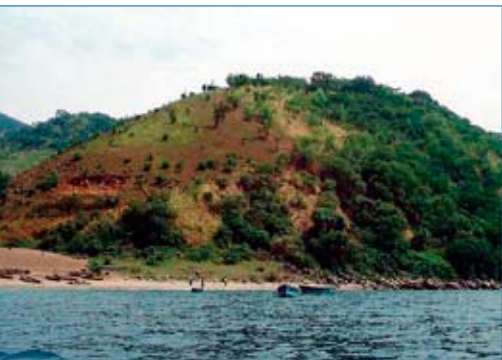




*Kalambo Falls,
Tanzania/Zambia border*



*Liftnet catamaran returning
from night's lamp fishing*



*Cultivation and deforestation on
steep lakeside slopes*



Kigoma Harbour, oil storage tanks

Finally, Tanganyika is remarkable as a scenic and conservation heritage site.

- Lying between high escarpments, with extensive stretches of unspoilt beaches and rocky promontories, numerous bays, and inshore islands, the near pristine waters of the lake border areas of wetlands, forest, and three National parks (Gombe Stream and Mahale Mountains in Tanzania and Nsumbu in Zambia), several protected areas and two Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International importance – Rusizi Delta and Malagarasi-Muyovozi Floodplain).
- Owing to its ancient geological history as a deep isolated basin, Tanganyika is among the most biodiverse Lakes on Earth. More than 2 000 species of plants and animals live in the Tanganyika Basin and half of these are endemic. Like the other African Great Lakes, Tanganyika is famous for its rich diversity of cichlid fish. What particularly distinguishes Tanganyika, however, is that it also hosts a great variety non-cichlid fish, snails, clams, crustaceans, leeches and sponges.

Ensuring the integrity of the Lake Tanganyika ecosystem and the sustainability of the fisheries it supports is clearly of the utmost importance. BUT...

Pressures on the lake and its resources have mounted alarmingly in recent years.

They are driven largely by *ever-expanding human populations* and attendant *unplanned settlement, unregulated commercial development, unregulated industrial and domestic wastewater disposal, destructive cultivation practices, deforestation, invasive species, pollution from transport vessels and unsustainable fishing activities*. And they have lately been exacerbated by large scale influxes of refugees and settlers – people fleeing or displaced from conflict zones within the wider region.

Continuing environmental degradation will in turn drive further deterioration of human welfare and livelihoods within the lake basin.

These are already in a very distressed state. Food security across the African Great Lakes region is inherently tenuous. Subject at all times to the effects of drought and other natural disasters, the underlying situation has worsened considerably within the last decade or so. Episodes of civil unrest and military conflict, and the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in many localities, have compounded the effects of population growth to challenge food production capabilities

