

Box B. **Encroaching fishers' land in Uganda**

At least half of the Ugandan municipalities on the lake Victoria have experienced attractive coastal lands being given away to investors as a result of the government's thirst for Foreign Direct Investment. This grab has been driven by the growing tourist industry, that takes over coastal land-, beaches-, and water-scapes; the introduction and expansion of industries, such as the flower industry, that build their processing plants along the lake; and the enlargement of aquaculture activities.

Even before the current wave of dispossession, Uganda's fishing communities at lake Victoria had been struggling with a complex set of interlinked crises since the introduction of the Nile perch in the 1960s. The Nile perch was introduced in an attempt to revive the local fishery after its economically valuable species had been overfished. This intervention resulted in a fishing industry boom. The local fishery changed from a local and artisanal biodiverse fishery, to a hierarchical and export-oriented fishery targeting Nile Perch and tilapia. The boom attracted new businesses and infrastructure development, and boosted the population along the lake. Poorly managed, the prospering fishery industry soon overfished the Nile perch. The decrease in fish created high competition amongst the small-scale fisher people, and the industry. Today, between 60 and 80 percent of the catch is exported, while local prices skyrocketed. As a result, local communities can no longer rely on the Nile perch as their daily source of protein.

Uganda's small-scale fishing sector contributes to the livelihoods of more than three million people. But as pressure from various export-oriented industries increases the competition for access to land and waters, the ongoing privatisation and enclosure of waterscapes prevents small-scale fishers from working and exacerbates their vulnerability. With no alternative livelihoods and faced with poverty, they resort to illegal practices, like using illegal gear, or fishing in forbidden waters. Illegal fishing methods, as well as the pollution caused by the growing industries, stress the ecosystem and further decrease its ability to let key species recover.

Source: Uganda Fish and Fisheries Conservation Association (UFFCA), a member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples.

