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**Co-Managing The Environment: Reassessing asymmetries, gaps and linkage policies between ‘the top’ and ‘the bottom’ in the management of the aquatic environment of Lake Victoria, Kenya.**

The concept of co-management is now fairly well understood particularly in the context of natural resource management. Co-management is variably defined, however, in principle, it means a formalised, preferably legalised, process of sharing authority and responsibility by government and organised user-groups in decentralised decision making and management...’. It means the active participation of all stakeholders from the top to the bottom in the management of a common property resource. Many researchers are of the view that co-management could provide the solution to long-term depletion of renewable common property resources. Taking the perspective of the environment as a common pool resource, it is feasible that there are positive prospects of employing co-management principles in environmental management. The underlying tenets of co-management, though, require shared perceptions and understanding of various aspects of environmental management, including, the environmental problems, the objectives, costs and the expected gains from environmental management. But in reality, there are asymmetries and gaps between stakeholders operating at various levels, depending on their usage, aims and considerations for the environment. This paper identifies the asymmetries, and their causes, in relation to various factors, including; education level disparity, access to environmental information, income disparities from environmental and non-environmental usage, perception of responsibility for the environment, existing opportunities for participation etc. The paper addresses the gaps resulting from the asymmetries, specifically, between the ‘top’ and the ‘bottom’ of the policy formulation and implementation chain.

The paper is based on a case study of Lake Victoria, Kenya, the world’s second largest fresh water lake, which presently faces many environmental challenges. The data has been collected from a cross-section of stakeholders, using questionnaires and participatory methods. Appropriate linkage policies are recommended to close down the gaps.