



Press Release
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New study charts risks and rewards of the forthcoming oil boom in the African Great Lakes

The Lake Tanganyika Floating Health Clinic / WAVE released a policy paper on the burgeoning hydrocarbon sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the surrounding African Great Lakes region.

The unprecedented study details how the oil and gas industries could boost the DRC's stability and prosperity – or, if managed badly, push the country and its neighbors into further cycles of economic, social and political turmoil.

Amy Lehman, the Founder and CEO of the LTFHC / WAVE (“Floating Clinic”), became interested in the hydrocarbon sector after realizing its potentially massive impact on the Great Lakes region – environmentally, socially and economically.

She and her team commissioned the study (“From Curse to Cure”) into the sector’s potential risks and rewards. It also focuses on the regulatory environment that will be needed for the positive scenario to unfold.

Ever since the Belgians’ search for wealth in the DRC in the 19th century, it has been known that the Congo holds vast mineral riches beneath its forests, from copper to cobalt. Less familiar is that the country is also rich in oil, from offshore blocks in the Atlantic, to the Central Basin around the mighty Congo River, all the way to the Great Lakes in the East. Only a small fraction of this energy resource wealth has been developed, producing about 20,000 barrels of crude per day, compared to 1.5 million for Libya.

But the Floating Clinic’s new study says this is about to change – extractive activity in the sector is expected to triple in the next two years in the Great Lakes.

The implications of an oil boom here are hard to overstate. It could stimulate a rapid industrialization, help address underdevelopment, and give financial ballast to a struggling government. Equally, it could trigger a new round of regional conflict and turn a country the size of Western Europe into the quintessential oil cursed wasteland.

“We were mindful of the precedent of the mining industry in the DRC, where a weak regulatory environment has enabled an unsystematic, and often corrupt exploitation of mineral wealth, mostly with little benefit to the Congolese,” says Lehman.

“The oil industry is the next big thing in the DRC, so it is a chance for the government – and industry – to do things properly. The region is at a crossroads – with this potential wealth, it can either go the way of Norway or the Niger Delta.”



Explaining why the organization has invested in understanding this sector, Lehman says that if the development of the reserves in Lake Tanganyika goes wrong, then the impoverished shoreline population her floating clinic will be servicing will be destabilized further. “In addition to the obvious environmental implications, it will hit the lake’s social and economic fabric, fracturing communities further, creating conflict and instability”.

Lehman says that non-profit organizations such as the Floating Clinic, which are operating in similar post-conflict environments, need to contribute wherever possible to commercially and politically realistic policy. “Otherwise we risk losing the very communities we are trying to help,” she comments.

Her aim is to set up a foundation that will assist the governments of the DRC and the other Great Lakes countries to develop such “best practice” hydrocarbon policies which are politically and commercially realistic. “This is an extraordinary opportunity to reshape one of the most troubled parts of the world, which has such huge potential,” says Lehman on September 10th from the stage of the 2014 iPAD Oil and Gas Conference in Kinshasa.

The publication is available to download at floatingclinic.org/download

Amy Lehman, MD, MBA, is the founder and CEO of the Lake Tanganyika Floating Health Clinic (LTFHC) / WAVE, a non-profit organization which has operated in sub-Saharan Africa for half a decade, mainly in the Lake Tanganyika Basin, bringing healthcare and other services to millions of isolated people. The LTFHC / WAVE has found new and effective ways of working in this isolated region by developing efficient models for healthcare delivery and health systems building, by improving supply chains and communications capacity and by promoting smart, cross-sector development. Follow us @LTFHC; email us at info@floatingclinic.org; or check out our work at floatingclinic.org.