

INCREASING THE CAPACITY FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN KENYA

By Jesse Kosgei and Tim McClanahan

Ashura Pamba is a 34-year-old mother and member of Vanga Beach Management Unit (BMU). In Vanga, a village of about 5,000 people on the southern edge of Kwale county in Kenya, Pamba is currently the BMU treasurer, tasked to collect the levy charge from fishermen, which also earns her income.

Mwambwiza Tuweni, a 38-year-old and father of seven, is a native from Jimbo village in Shimoni-Vanga seascape bordering Tanzania. Jimbo is a small fishing village inhabited by 800 people, out of which 150 are male and female fishers.

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) management has progressed through Kenya's Beach Management Units instituted over the past decade. However, there are still numerous barriers to long-term sustainable management and compliance.

These include inadequate national and local level monitoring, information, governance processes, and feedback needed to support an effective national strategy for the SSF sector.

The primary aim of the "Achieving Coral Reef Fishery Sustainability in East African Biodiversity and Climate Refugia Centers" project is to build the capacity for sustainable fisheries management, contributing to increased resilience of coral reefs and continued provision of community benefits including improved livelihoods and greater food security. Thanks to people like Pamba and Tuweni, that goal is being met.

Pamba heard about the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Fish project, led by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the opportunity to be involved in monitoring local fisheries resources through the BMU leaders. Because of her new role with the project, she can now identify fish grouped by families, fishing gears, and many fishing areas, which are important in determining the status of fisheries resources.

"Since I closely interact with fishers as a treasurer, I did not have a problem being involved in recording fish," Pamba said. "I was originally not sure I would be selected from the 30 of us in Vanga. I thank God that after much training I was selected from the Vanga BMU."

"Through this project, I have learned several things about fishing, including the need to collect fisheries data and that fishermen have many fishing grounds since they do not fish at the same place every day."

Now, Pamba is well known by dealers and fishermen since she interacts with them at least three times a week. Also, through this project, she has economic stability thanks to the stipend she receives, and she can now discuss with fishers the need to collect data.

"I now know different fish is targeted by specific gears," Pamba said. "The community benefits too when I participate in trainings as we all understand our fisheries status. Moreover, three of us received data collection training skills."



To the left, Pamba is weighing fish in Vanga BMU, and to the right, Tuweni is identifying fishing grounds during participatory mapping. (Photos by Jesse Kosgei, Wildlife Conservation Society-Kenya Marine Program)

PROJECT TEAM

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Thanks to the training, Pamba and her fellow BMU members will be better able to monitor the fishery and make management decisions to protect the resources on which so many local fisheries and community members depend for their livelihoods and food security.

Tuweni is taking part in the Fish Innovation Lab project in his community through cooperative mapping of local fishing grounds.

“I am currently Jimbo Beach Management Unit vice secretary, and part-time, I record shark and ray data for the Wildlife Conservation Society,” Tuweni said. “Fishing has been my main occupation since I was 18 years old. I learned setnet, sharknet, and pointed stick fishing skills from my father. However, I currently use reef-seine nets as a result of reduced catches. Through the fisheries patterns mapping activity, I learned the different types of fishing gears, fishing areas targeted by different gears, as well as areas of high fishing effort in general. These will guide our decisions moving forward.”

Tuweni heard about the fisheries patterns mapping activity when WCS communicated to him on behalf of the BMU.

“I was directly informed by the WCS office since I am the BMU vice secretary,” Tuweni said. “I informed the larger BMU for discussion and to select members to be involved in the activity.”

The activity was planned such that each day a BMU leader was to join the team. On the day Tuweni participated, the group documented various fishing grounds in the area.

“I took part in the activity during hand-drawing landmarks and fishing grounds, digitizing hand-drawn maps, land ground-truthing, and partly ground-truthing fishing areas in the ocean,” Tuweni said.

The hand-drawing exercise involves users mapping out landmarks and fishing areas by hand on paper, which are later digitized either using Google Earth or Quantum Geographic Information System. This process is important in determining the size of fishing grounds and consequently determine productivity of an area as far as yields.

“This project was beneficial to me and the community since it brought us together. Plus, we learned and identified important fishing areas,” Tuweni said. “Also, the community was happy for WCS considerations to fund their travel and meal allowances during the whole week activity. I thank WCS organizers for ensuring women were involved too.”

The maps and data generated by Tuweni, Pamba, and other BMU members will enable their communities to better monitor local fishery resources and make informed decisions to protect the long-term sustainability of the fishery, providing food and livelihoods for years to come.

ABOUT THE FISH INNOVATION LAB

The Fish Innovation Lab supports the United States Agency for International Development’s agricultural research and capacity building work under Feed the Future, the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. Mississippi State University is the program’s management entity. The University of Rhode Island, Texas State University, Washington University in St. Louis, and RTI International serve as management partners.

www.feedthefuture.gov
www.fishinnovationlab.msstate.edu

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