

Workshop Report
“Small-Scale fisheries and the Blue Economy”.
Knowledge, Involvement, and Perceptions of Local Actors.
The case of Coastal Kenya.

Introduction

Small scale fisheries are integral to the blue economy concept contributing about a quarter of the world's fish catches globally (The Sea Around Us Project, 2016) and estimated to support 90% of approximately 120 million people (men and women) involved in full-time and part-time activities (FAO, 2015). It is estimated that about 95% of the total small-scale fisheries catches are destined for human consumption hence vital for food security (FAO, 2015). Small scale fisheries are considered more sustainable, and climate-resilient compared to large scale fisheries (Leleu *et al.*, 2014). Nonetheless, the small-scale fisheries are threatened due to poor governance, overfishing, habitat degradation, pollution, and climate change, etc., hence threatening the food security, and livelihoods of the millions of people that are dependent on the sector. The blue economy approach is evolving at a time when global fisheries are deteriorating at alarming rates.

The small-scale fisheries are limited to the nearshore waters, and thus likely to be most affected by the Blue economy development projects among others, mining, port development. According to UNCLOS 1982, the Ocean belongs to the people and thus has the responsibility to manage it through proper governance processes. The blue economy is defined by the World Bank as, “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihood and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health (World Bank, 2014). However, there is limited understanding of the concept especially among the indigenous people, and local communities who are highly dependent on small-scale fisheries. This has developed the perception that the blue economy concept is biased on lucrative sectors such as Seabed mining, shipping & maritime transport, and industrial fishing, as a majority of the WIO coastal fisheries, are overfished, and seriously threatened due to habitat degradation, and climatic causes.

On 29th June 2021, Community Action for Nature Conservation-Kenya, in partnership with the Western Indian Ocean Governance & Exchange Network (WIOGEN), conducted a workshop in Mombasa, Kenya entitled, *“Small-Scale fisheries and the Blue Economy”*. *Knowledge, Involvement, and Perceptions of Local Actors. The case of Coastal Kenya*. The workshop engaged 20 participants including local actors (fishermen, fish traders, community conservation groups), and civil society members (NGOs). The workshop was participatory and aimed at answering the following questions; i) do you understand the term 'blue economy? And, what are the blue

economy sectors? ii) Are small-scale and artisanal fisheries an integral component of the blue economy? iii) Is the blue economy concept promoting the sustainable wellbeing of the marine environment? iv) Will the blue economy concept solve the biodiversity and climate change crisis? v) What are the governance needs for achieving the sustainable blue economy agenda?

Workshop Overview

The workshop was participatory, however, it began with a brief explanation of the Western Indian Ocean Governance Exchange Network and its role in promoting sustainable Ocean management and governance in the region. A series of presentations were made covering the blue economy paradigm in Kenya, and the Western Indian Ocean at large. The presentations majorly focused on “The Blue Economy”, and its implication on Sustainable development in Kenya & the Western Indian Ocean. The presentations focused on enhancing awareness among the local actors on the blue economy concept, and also on the socioeconomic and ecological wellbeing of the WIO region.

The participatory approach also illustrated the implications of the blue economy towards meeting global biodiversity & climate change commitments. The exchange workshop also illustrated the opportunities from the blue economy, including the recent launch of the five years (2020-2025) joint Government of Kenya & World Bank-funded project namely, the Kenya marine fisheries and socioeconomic development project (KEMFSED), and the Go blue initiative implemented by the Coastal region economic development bloc. The local participants were allowed to react to the presentations on the blue economy agenda in respect to their areas of jurisdiction with a focus on the workshop theme.



Participants during a WIOGEN STEMs workshop on Small-scale fisheries & the Blue economy at Mtwapa Country Resort, Mombasa, Kenya on 29th June 2021.

Discussion

The findings from the workshop indicated that a majority of small-scale/artisanal fishers have a limited understanding of the blue economy concept, as the majority of them have little formal education. Much of the community argument focused on the sustainability of the blue economy on the small-scale fisheries which are highly impacted by poor governance, lack of adequate monitoring & enforcement, overfishing, habitat degradation, and climate change. The local actors claimed that some of the blue economy projects such as port development are likely to impact the artisanal/small-scale fisheries which are limited to the coastal waters, and highly dependent on the ecological wellbeing of coastal ecosystems. Degradation of blue carbon ecosystems such as seagrass meadows, salt marshes, and mangroves will result in significant greenhouse gas emissions, and thus proper mitigation measures need to be implemented before implementing projects with significant environmental impacts.

For, instance the community cited a lack of adequate involvement of the local communities in the conduction of the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for the Shimoni port southern Kenya because the dredging activities will affect many of the fishing grounds and many local migrant fishers. Also, the dredging in Lamu port north coast of Kenya has resulted in high turbidity and sedimentation, hence impacting on the coral reefs & seagrass beds, fisheries productivity. The African Union Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 focuses on among others offshore crude oil, and mineral extraction. These extractive industries are likely to impact marine biodiversity, and also increase the emission of greenhouse gases. The local actors were aware of the global biodiversity and climate change crisis, and thus serious management measures are a prerequisite to meet global biodiversity and climate change goals

Conclusion

The indigenous people and local communities need adequate sensitization on the blue economy concept, and the need for their inclusion in decision-making processes. The community perception of the blue economy is that serious management & governance processes need to be implemented per the United Nations sustainable development goals, and other local legislative and regulatory frameworks. This is because the few ongoing developments lack sustainability measures, and yet the blue economy is deemed to be the solution to socio-economic empowerment and sustainable development of the region. Appropriate regulatory measures need to be enforced to prevent unsustainable exploitation of resources. The ministerial governments of the WIO region should embrace green energy sources such as wind energy, solar energy, tidal & wave energy to minimize carbon emissions.

The blue economy concept should consider the global biodiversity and climate change crisis due to unsustainable anthropogenic practices, and instead integrate the blue economy with the UN

sustainable development goals and Paris agreement on climate change. This includes the inclusion of local people in policy formulation processes. The Kenya marine fisheries and socioeconomic development project and the Go Blue initiative should also embrace sustainable livelihood enhancement projects with goals that are likely to persist even after the project elapses. The development of marine fisheries socioeconomic development projects should incorporate lessons learned from previous projects to develop more sustainable projects. The local people were called upon to use appropriate tools in lobbying for their rights to a healthy marine environment such as the FAO Small-Scale fisheries Voluntary Guidelines, media & communication, and evidence-based advocacy (using the national laws and policies).

Acknowledgment

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