

Mainstreaming community managed marine areas into the Western Indian Ocean's governance frameworks

Melita Samoilys *et al.*

CORDIO East Africa, Kenya

Abstract

The declining state of marine resources and biodiversity, including local disappearance of species, is a widespread problem in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). While the value and importance of marine resources and biodiversity to the livelihoods of millions of coastal people in the WIO is well recognised, improvement in the management of marine resource extraction has been slow and piecemeal. There are several causes of the decline in health of the WIO's marine resources and biodiversity, which among others include inadequate area protection, inadequate engagement of communities in management, poor management of small-scale fisheries (SSF) all of which are exacerbated by poor funding commitment. The paper discuss how mainstreaming community managed marine areas into the WIO's policy frameworks can improve marine area protection and SSF management. Locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) provide an alternative community-led governance mechanism, deliver positive socio-economic and conservation outcomes and are an inclusive, equitable and participatory approach to marine resources management. These small protected areas covered > 11,000 km² in the WIO in 2014, collectively increasing MPA area coverage to 11%. The LMMA model has been increasingly adopted in Madagascar and Kenya with numerous successes and more recently in Mozambique. However, these LMMA successes have not extended into SSFs, with high levels of overfishing evident in Madagascar and Kenya. Unsustainable fishing in SSFs in much of the WIO has resulted in biodiversity loss and fish population declines. This discussion paper addresses the link between ocean conservation and the wellbeing of coastal communities, which is reinforced by SDG14 (life below water) interacts with SDG1 (no poverty), SDG2 (zero hunger), SDG12 (responsible consumption and production (efficient use of natural resources), and SDG13 (climate action). It presents research findings to support the developments of policy and legal frameworks in the WIO that provide for improved involvement of local communities in marine resource management.

It is recommended that;

- The role of LMMAs in fisheries management is recognized and expanded.
- Legal frameworks to be developed and adopted to streamline community engagement in the establishment of LMMAs
- Development of legislation to ban damaging fishing gears used in SSFs be supported.
- Develop and implement national and regional long term sustainable financing mechanisms to support LMMAs and SSFs