



Beach Management Units Pre-elections survey for Shimoni-Vanga Seascape, Kwale County

Study Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the past years fisheries management was managed using command and control using a top-down approach. The Country then took a shift towards co-management through the integration of traditional and formal institutionalised fisheries management through BMUs. BMUs are the backbone of fisheries co-management in Kenya under Kenya Fisheries service, delegated to County Fisheries departments. Public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment is encouraged in the constitution (Gok, 2016). This allows for the knowledge dissemination and understanding of all stakeholders and is bound to improve management of the marine resources.

Despite the improvements made in governance of the Coastal zone, issues and challenges that require urgent attention still exist. In respect to capacity, many agencies continue to face constraints in form of inadequate financial and technical resources. Low funding affects capacity of institutions to carry out their mandate.

In exercise of democratic rights, BMU governance requires that elections are conducted after every four years where new office bearers are elected. In Kwale County, BMUs officials have served for the last six years without an election, supposedly due to lack of funds. Kwale county government, in charge of funding and conducting elections has been unable to mobilise funds for conducting elections. There a possibility therefore that the status quo has largely affected the performance of BMUs in general.

1.1 Objective

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the delay in elections has affected the performance of BMU leaders within Shimoni-Vanga seascape, Kwale County.

2 BACKGROUND TO BMU GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

BMUs consist of fishermen, fish traders, boat owners, fish processors and other beach stakeholders who depend on fisheries activities for their livelihoods (KCDP, 2013). They govern using Fisheries Management and Development Act No. 35 of 2016 and BMU regulations of 2007, through their internal administrative rules (by-laws) approved by BMU assembly and director of fisheries.

Each BMU has a well demarcated area of jurisdiction known as Beach (Gok, 2016). All BMUs are entitled to issue by-laws which are binding upon its members. According to BMU regulations 2007, BMU administrative structure consists of the assembly (all registered members of the BMU), executive committee (assembly members elected to the executive through a secret ballot) and various sub-committees (as specified in the by-laws of individual BMUs).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study area

Shimoni-vanga seascape is a joint co-management area comprising of seven BMUs (Shimoni, Kibuyuni, Wasini, Mkwiro, Majoreni, Jimbo, Vanga) as well as adjacent villages (Figure 1).

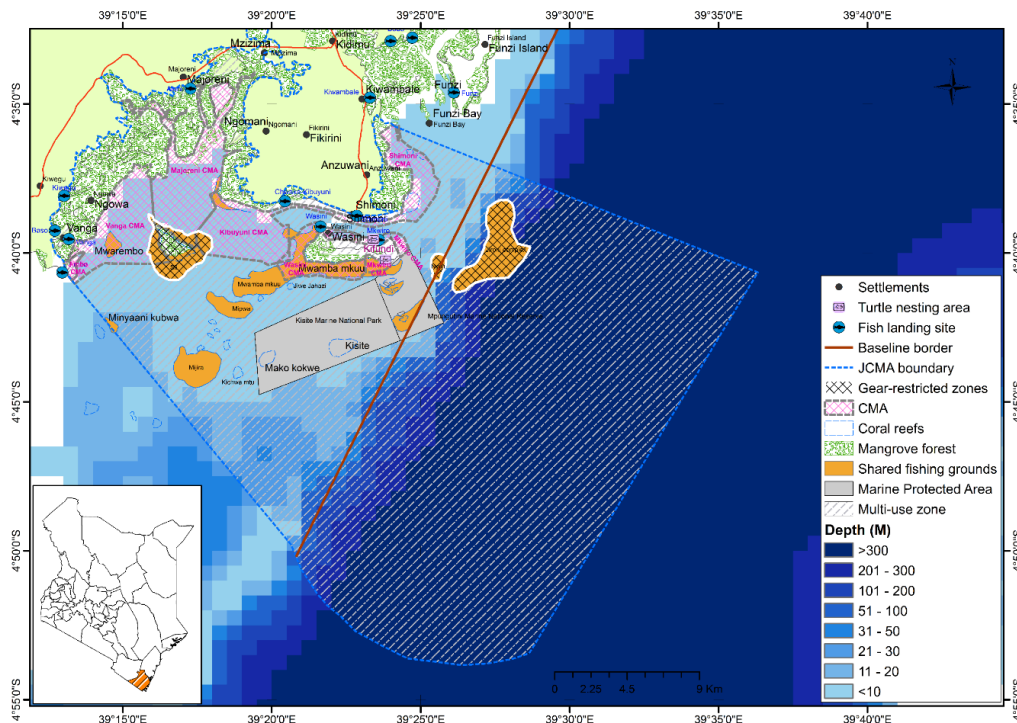


Figure 1. Map of the Shimoni-Vanga seascape showing the seven BMUs and their co-management areas. SOURCE: KCDP, 2016.

4 METHODOLOGY

Interviews were conducted from 14 BMU members, two opinion leaders and three government (Fisheries) representatives. Open ended questions were used for opinion leaders and Likert 5-point scale for BMU members (executives and ordinary members). A set of four statements was used and assessed according the following Likert scale:

- (1) Strongly agree
- (2) Slightly agree
- (3) Neither agree nor disagree
- (4) Slightly disagree
- (5) Strongly disagree

Likert assessments statements were as follows:

- Delaying of the BMU elections has negatively affected the executive committee performance
- An election will improve BMU performance
- There is reluctance of BMU executives to conduct their duties
- BMU members are questioning performance of their BMUs

Percentages for each of the above were used to describe results whose discussions were reinforced by information collected from opinion leaders and government representatives.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Delaying of the BMU elections has negatively affected the executive committee performance

More than half of the respondents agreed slightly and strongly that the delay in elections has affected the executive performance (Figure 2). It was found out that some of the executive members have resigned due to conflicts and others have become inactive leaving all responsibilities to a few individuals. BMU functions such as monthly meetings with the assembly are not as frequent as they should be. Some of the respondents who were members of the executive committee felt that there was internal conflict among the members of the executive on matters to deal with resource mobilization, accountability and transparency.

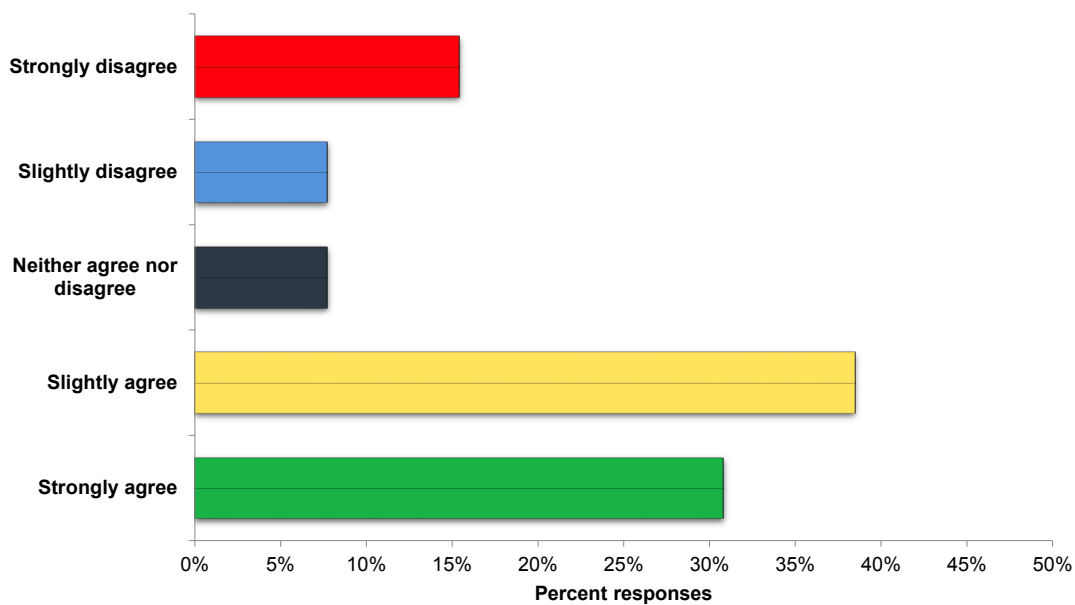


Figure 2. Percent responses against Likert scale for statement one.

5.2 An election will improve BMU performance

Again, most of the respondents agreed that an election would be beneficial to the BMU (Figure 3) as newly elected team would come in with different ideas and change would also be good to see what new agendas they would bring to the table. They were open to an election should resources be available. What however they felt would be a challenge is that if the same team is elected back then there would not be so much a difference. However, this may not be the case since most officials have served two consecutive terms that disqualifies them from further seeking leadership positions.

Another lot felt neutral about this, reason being an election is not a guarantee that the new team will work different from the old one- it could either improve or further lower the BMU performance. Then there were those who felt there was no need for an election as operations were 'normal' according to them.

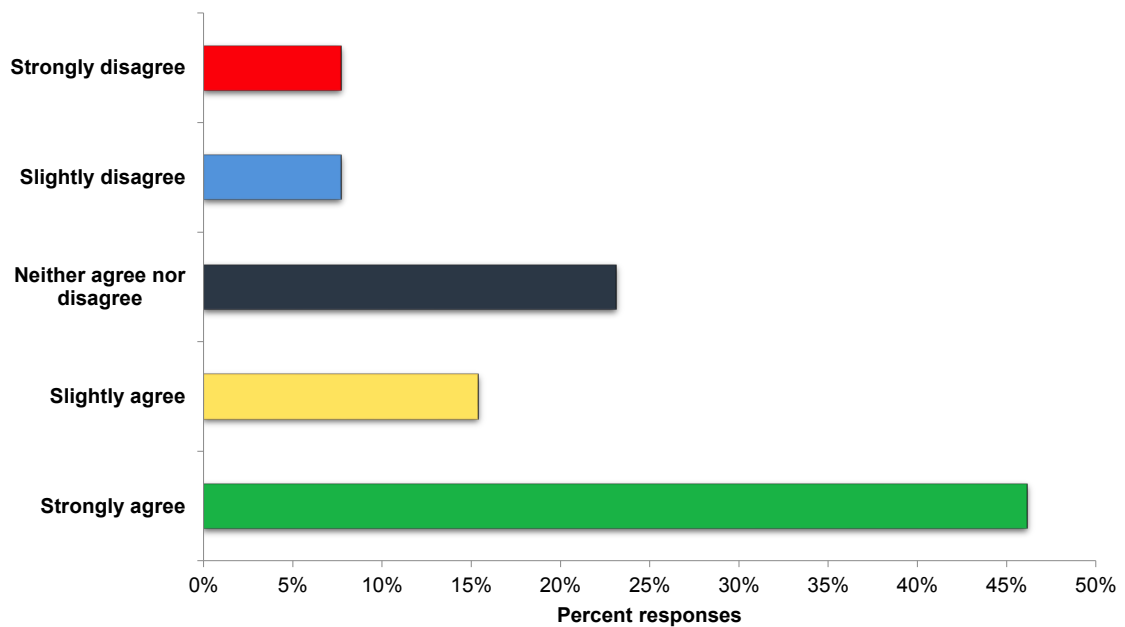


Figure 3. Percent responses against Likert scale for statement two.

5.3 There is reluctance of BMU executives to conduct their duties

More than half agreed slightly and strongly that reluctance there was reluctance by BMU executives to conduct their duties, such as enforcement (Figure 4). Those that disagreed felt that BMUs were running their activities as usual. There was no breach of BMU by-laws on the Beach areas as patrols were done regularly. Those that agreed said the reluctance was due to lack of motivation and self-drive as most members have even stopped renewing their BMU membership. Others said the administrative structure is a mess currently which makes it hard to run operations as there is no clear flow of authority because some of the executive members have resigned. Lastly, there was a perception that reluctance was caused by lack of finances rather than failure to elect new office bearers.

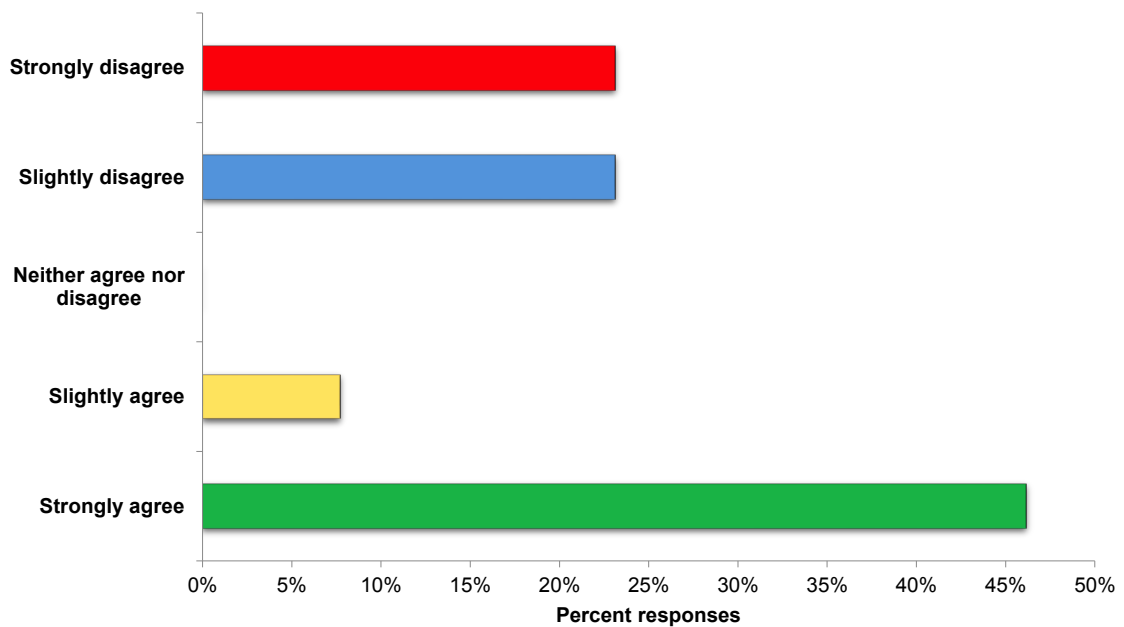


Figure 4. Percent responses against Likert scale for statement three.

5.4 BMU members are questioning performance of their BMUs

Majority of respondents were neutral on this matter (Figure 5). They mentioned that whether the executive changes or not there are always individuals opposing authorities and it doesn't depend on the circumstance. Those that agreed felt that the community does not understand what is going on with the BMU anymore as was in the past. They no longer hold meetings, the lack of elections makes the communities feel like BMUs are becoming inefficient and also when they witness the internal wrangles. Most respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this they felt that this is not brought about by the elections

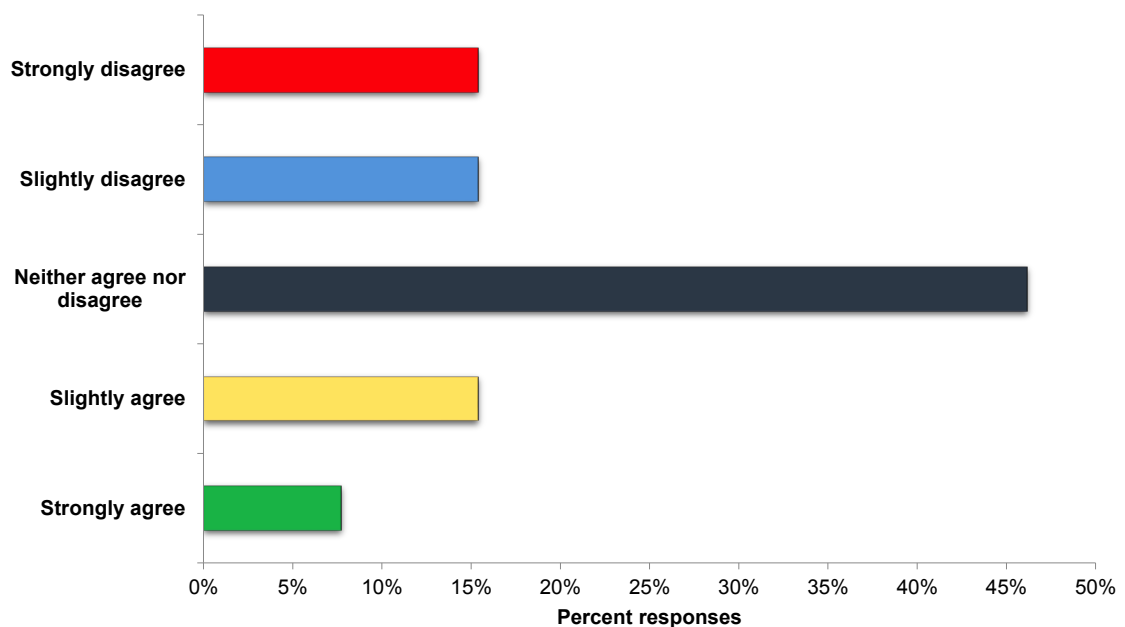


Figure 5. Percent responses against Likert scale for statement four.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above study findings the following is concluded:

- Election delays have negatively affected the performance of incumbent BMU executives and the entire assembly. Thus, most members are now unmotivated and have not renewed their memberships as they do not see the importance.
- Internal conflicts amongst members and external conflicts with the community are some of the issues that cannot be addressed by holding elections.
- Most of BMU assembly members have failed to renew their membership, they feel the current executive committees are not transparent and accountable and most do not see the benefits of being members of the BMU.
- BMU members are questioning performance of their BMUs but this is not because of the delay in election, it is out of curiosity as some do not see the benefits of joining the BMU and there are those individuals who oppose any form of authority with no any reason at all.
- BMU's want and are in need of elections but the responsible authority is not in a position to mobilize resources required for conducting elections.
- There is a problem when it comes to flow of information, authority and decisions made by executives since most members fail to participate in BMU activities. This is the case on enforcement.

The following is recommended:

- BMU election is an urgent matter and since Kwale county government is not in a position to mobilize resources to conduct the elections, CSO and private sector support may be required especially for Shimoni-Vanga BMUs where GEF SGP projects are implemented.

- For conflict resolution there should be awareness campaigns within the community to sensitize them on roles and importance of BMU. On internal conflicts the executive should be accountable and make reports on expenditure available to members of the assembly for transparency purposes.
- Elected leaders should have enough support from members to avoid opposition once they are elected in office.

7 REFERENCES

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