

## 4. The 4-beaches survey in Uganda: Nkombe Beach

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### 4.1. Introduction

Nkombe Beach, the landing site chosen for the Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project's '4-beaches Survey', is located approximately 35 kilometres east of Jinja along Uganda's Lake Victoria's coastline. The landing is located at the end of a long bay, which separates it from the main lake. Nkombe is also fairly isolated from good infra-structural facilities and is also located some distance away from the main Jinja to Tororo highway at the end of a poor, dirt track. Its isolation ensures that it is only infrequently visited by trucks from the fish filleting factories.

This isolation ensured that the landing site was little exposed to the activities of fisheries researchers and that it was deeply suspicious of the FIRRI team when the latter first started working at the landing site. These difficulties were, however, resolved in time.

In this paper, we outline the main findings of FIRRI's research work at Nkombe over the year between September 2000 and September 2001. The procedures employed and other methodological notes are provided in Chapter 2 of this volume. We commence with an over-view of the many institutions operating at Nkombe which serve the beach and its fishery directly, or which may be used for this purpose. Subsequently, we the ability of the community to support externally derived fisheries regulations. We then explore the possible benefits that the community might obtain from their own, internally-generated, institutions, and which may serve as incentives in the development of future initiatives. We also consider the attributes which may be necessary for these kinds of institutions to endure over time. We then suggest possible re-definitions of Fisheries Department activities and suggest that these should really focus on the provision of extension to support community level institutions. Finally, we conclude with a number of recommendations derived from this study.

### 4.2. Community institutions at Nkombe

The following were identified as the community-based institutions at Nkombe that have an influence on access to, and ownership of, fisheries resources: the Landing Management Committee (LMC), the Local Council 1 (LC1), the Byantuyo Football Club (BFC), the Bukenye Beach Farmers' Association (BBFA), the Bidhampola ('patience') Women's Group and the Nakusizomu Group. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

The LMC's responsibilities are as follows:

- (a) To solve disputes between fishers.
- (b) To spearhead the formulation of bye-laws.
- (c) To control the use of illegal fishing methods.
- (d) To register and issue fishing permits to the new fishers.

The latter responsibility is done after certifying that new fishers have identity cards from the Fisheries Department and a letter of introduction from their former place of work. The LMC is headed by a '*gabunga*', who works hand in hand with Fisheries Department staff to effect fisheries management. All fisheries-related cases are first reported to the LMC and, where need arises, serious ones are referred to the LC for further action.

The District Fisheries Officer (DFO) supervises the elections of the LMC, while the sub-county ('*gombolola*') chief and a representative of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) witness the process. The electorate is composed of the whole beach community (fishers and non-fishers). Voting involves

forming queues behind a candidate of one's choice. The LMC is composed of five members and two guards and its term of office is not specified. When the community becomes dissatisfied with any LMC member's performance, a change can be effected by the community writing to the RDC providing five reasons for the removal of an LMC member.

The Local Council 1 (LC1) committee handles all non-fishery related disputes in the community as well as fishery-related disputes referred to it by the LMC. Cases handled by the LC1 include land disputes, debt defaulting, and insults. Serious cases such as rape, murder, theft and fish poisoning are either referred to the next administrative level above the LC1, the LC2, or the police.

The LC1 is also elected by the community, again by forming lines behind their chosen candidates. A representative of the District Returning Officer conducts the elections and thereafter swears in the winning candidates. The LC1 term of office is five years, although members of the council may be removed by a vote of no confidence. Committee members do not earn salaries, and the activities of the council are funded by court fees, fines and various fees charged for services by the council. The executive committee has ten members, including a chairperson, vice chairperson, general secretary, treasurer and secretaries for publicity, defence, youth affairs, women's affairs, environment and people with disabilities.

The Byantuyo Football Club (BFC) is a group involved in playing football, farming crops, keeping poultry and fishing. The poultry farm had 52 birds. At the time of PM&E exercises, however, all the birds had died. The group began with 37 members, but following the sub-division of the village council, numbers declined to 22. Some group members withdrew because they felt they were not receiving enough training, and others because they often did not have a ball for playing.

The BFCs objectives are to develop the talents of the youth in football and to eradicate poverty. They face a number of problems in farming activities, which they identified as follows:

- (a) A lack market for their products.
- (b) A lack pumps and pesticide for spraying crops.
- (c) A lack of irrigation pumps for watering crops during dry seasons.

They also faced with fishing, and identified these as follows:

- (a) The high cost of nets of the correct mesh sizes.
- (b) Lack of transport for fish products.
- (c) Poor markets for fish products..

The group listed the following as its future plans:

- a) To register with the District Community Development Officer.
- b) To assist each member with ploughing their plots and spraying their crops.
- c) To have a big cassava and coffee plantations.
- d) To lobby for funds from Non-Governmental Organisations and seek credit facilities.

The Bukenye Beach Farmers' Association (BBFA) is a community organisation involved in poultry farming, crop farming and fishing. Its membership is composed of both men and women, although there are more men. Some of the BBFA's members are also members of the BFC. During the PM&E exercise, it was found that BBFA produced a draft constitution and also to register itself with the District Community Development Offices as one of the organisations operating at Nkombe.

The Bidhampola ('patience') Women's Group started in December 1999 with seven members and now has 21. Its objectives are to pool money to fund small-scale business and to buy clothes for group members. Initially, each member contributed Ushs 2,500/- towards the pool. This increased to 3,000/- every time the group met. Such meetings occurred every two weeks. The group had a chairperson, treasurer and a secretary. It made drums and other musical instruments. It had purchased livestock (four pigs, three goats

and twelve hens), cultivated tomatoes, and established a clonal coffee nursery from which each member was to get five plants in the future. During the PM&E exercise, however, the team found that the pigs had died and the clonal coffee plants had withered. The group had also purchased two cows and was planning to procure a new stock of clonal coffee seedlings. They tried to get involved in making handicrafts, but they lacked the necessary materials. The group was not yet registered with the district.

To join the group, a woman had to pay a registration fee of Ushs. 500/-. After two weeks, if a member had not paid her Ushs. 3,000/- contribution, she was fined 500/-. If the member then failed again to pay her dues, then her husband would be approached and the money demanded from him. If he was then late paying her dues, he was fined an additional 100/-. If the husband failed to show up with the money at all, he would be fined 200/-. If these measures failed to work, the defaulting member was taken to the LC1.

During the PM&E exercise, it came to the team's notice that Nakusizomu was one of the groups operating at Nkombe, although not initially identified during previous PRA studies. Five members started this group in August 1999. Membership comprised men, although women were free to join. Each member contributed a 3000/- membership fee. The major objective of the group was to give financial/material and moral support to members and/or their families in the event that they or a close relative should die. As in many other African countries, burials and associated ceremonies can cost a great deal – so much, in fact, that the bereaved may have difficulty meeting these expenses. When one of the Nakusizomu members suffers from a loss, then the group contribute 10,000/- towards his burial costs. Burials will only qualify for the donation if the departed is a very close family relative, such as a parent, child, brother or sister.

The group also lends money to members at an interest rate of 10% and intends to keep poultry and livestock in future. The group considers lack of capital as its major constraint. Below are some of the regulations governing the group's activities:

All the above institutions influence access to, and ownership of, fisheries resources at Nkombe. The LMC and LC1 are, however, considered the most effective of the beach's institutions for the following reasons:

- (a) Have clearly defined roles and are mainly involved in conflict resolution.
- (b) Work hand-in-hand with Fisheries Department staff to effect fisheries regulation.
- (c) More people participate in electing these committees compared to other groups.
- (d) They are always available in the community.
- (e) The LMC spearheads the formulation of community bye-laws, some of which help to guide the fishery and beach activities.

#### **4.3. Community support for externally introduced management measures**

We examined the ability or inability of the community to support externally introduced management measures, and obtained the following results:

- (a) In 1999, at the peak of the fish poisoning crisis, the office of the RDC instructed the District Fisheries Officer to set up Landing Management Committees (LMC) that would help to curb poisoning. The Nkombe community responded to the directive and elected a committee of seven officials that were able to work hand in hand with Fisheries Department staff at the beach to successfully curb the practice.
- (b) In April 2001, a new member of the Fisheries Department was posted to Nkombe, who, together with the LMC, enforced a resolution that no one was allowed to fish using a boat seine. The community supported this move because they blamed boat seining for reducing their catches and the size of the fish they caught. This was because such seines are set in one place only, which ensures that fish breeding sites are disturbed or destroyed. In addition, because the seine is left for some time, then the fish hauled are dead when brought out of the water. This is not the case with beach seines, where fish are alive when drawn out of the water, and so juveniles can be returned to the water. Additional concerns that the community had for boat seining were that mesh sizes used were typically very small, and that a stick was used to beat the water and drive fish into the net. The community also said

that they understood that there was a relationship between declining catches and boat seining because of frequent discussions they had held with visiting FIRRI researchers. At a meeting at FIRRI in August 2001, participants from Nkombe reported that fishers who were using boat seines had been forced to leave. They attributed the success of the ban on the fact that the whole community had participated in its enforcement.

- (c) The LMC has worked together with Fisheries Department staff to enforce the following state-based fisheries regulations: boat licensing, fishing permits, a ban on boat seining, and a ban on fish poisoning. In addition, they have sought to ensure that there are many fishers using gillnets of mesh size of 4.5 inches and above as opposed to the previous years where mesh sizes ranged between 2 and 4 inches. They have also worked to increase average boat lengths to improve safety out on the lake.

There was, however, evidence to suggest that the community was unable to support other externally introduced management measures. Whereas the community felt that the state-based regulations were 'good', the officials of the LMC said that fishers go ahead and break them because they lack capital to purchase the recommended gears.

#### **4.4. Community benefits for adoption/development of regulatory institutions**

The studies carried out at Nkombe suggested that by adopting/developing regulatory institutions, the community stood to benefit in the following ways:

- (a) Mechanisms for resolving conflicts amongst themselves were established.
- (b) Better catches and increases to the size of fish landed were expected as a result of controls on illegal fishing methods/gears and the registration of new fishers.
- (c) A good working relationship between the community and beach authorities particularly those controlling local markets and Fisheries Department staff.
- (d) Reduced gear theft cases as a result of bye-laws passed on fishing times and sever punishments for net thieves.

#### **4.5. Survival factors for Nkombe community-based institutions**

The research team also considered possible factors which may contribute to the 'robustness' (sustainability) of Nkombe's various managerial institutions. We propose that the following contributes directly to ensuring that the landing's institutions endure over time:

- (a) The community is small in size and most members know each other. They maintain close contact, have developed trust in one another and have face to face communication through regular community meetings.
- (b) The community's institutions and their leaders have clearly defined roles.
- (c) The leaders are democratically elected.
- (d) Membership of community institutions is clearly defined based on registration and the payment of a membership fee.
- (e) The institutions are formed with clear objectives and common interests.
- (f) The community has established bye-laws that bind them together.
- (g) National enabling policies for the formulation of bye-laws exist (decentralisation policies).
- (h) Most of the people affected by the landing's bye-laws are included and able to participate at different levels of decision-making.
- (i) Regular meetings are held to take decisions and settle disputes.

#### **4.6. Extension service delivery**

On the basis of this survey's findings, the research team was able to come up with a number of suggestions for extension services that might be able to support the regulatory activities of fishing communities and their bye-laws:

- (a) Research dissemination workshops: community members can be invited to research institutions for workshops during which they can learn managerial skills and also better methods of fishing and how to maintain create hygiene conditions.
- (b) The fisheries staff should be relieved of law enforcement in view of the existing conflicts between extension work and enforcement roles.
- (c) Fisheries Department staff could affect their extension services through local demonstration in, for example, gear mounting, setting and repair, and the provision of advice on dangerous fishing activities.
- (d) Existing community-based groups could be used to bring people together for purposes of delivering extension services.
- (e) Credit facilities are essential for ensuring that communities can have access to legal gear, or improve their fishing activities by purchasing, for example, outboard motors.
- (f) Sensitisation through radio programmes on fisheries-related activities.

#### **4.7. Concluding recommendations**

- (a) There is need to provide LMCs with the legally endorsed right to participate in fisheries management
- (b) The level of co-ordination amongst existing community institutions needs to be strengthened.
- (c) Institutions that provide credit to their members in order to finance fisheries and other income-generating activities as a way of diversifying sources of income for fishing communities should be encouraged and/or strengthened.
- (d) There is need to train members of the LMC in fisheries management skills.
- (e) There is need to equip the LMC with patrol equipment so they can contribute towards theft alleviation.
- (f) There should be a clearly defined term of office for LMC office bearers.
- (g) There is need to formalise funding arrangements for the LMCs.
- (h) Fisheries Department staff should be relieved of law enforcement duties in view of the existing conflicts between extension work and enforcement roles.
- (i) Existing groups should be utilised for the purposes of delivering extension services.