

# Assessment of the Performance of Beach Management Units (BMUs) on Lakes Victoria, Albert, Kyoga and George

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## Introduction

Until the late 1990s the fisheries of Ugandan lakes had been managed by government where stakeholders were excluded from the decision-making process. In order to involve other stakeholders, co-management was adopted. Operationalising Co-management on landing sites has led to the formation of BMUs at gazetted landing sites. A BMU is made up of a BMU assembly and the BMU committee that it elects. A BMU committee should be: 30% boat owners; 30% boat barias 30% including fish processors, boat makers, local gear makers and repairers, fishing input dealers and managers and 10% fish mongers/traders; and if possible, 30% women. To operate at a particular landing site, one must be registered with the BMU. The BMU assembly is the supreme organ of a BMU empowered to elect, approve and remove the BMU committee

The roles of a BMU committee include: local marking of fishing gears and outboard engines; vetting of boat owners and fishers in collaboration with government officials to ensure licenses are granted to those registered with the BMU; propose by-laws and identify fish breeding areas; undertake monitoring, control, surveillance, collect frame surveys, catch, socio-economic data; inspect and record visiting boats; improve sanitation, hygiene at landing sites; marketing of fish and fish products through BMU net working; make annual work plans and budgets; formulate funding proposals and make financial reports.

## Objective

Assess fisher folk participation, establish the challenges faced and draw recommendations for improvement of Beach Management Units' performance.

## Methodology:

Surveys and Focus Group Discussions were carried out on random samples of people engaged in fisheries related activities on Lakes Victoria, Albert, Kyoga and George. Key Informant Interviews were also held with DFOs, BMU committees and other selected key authorities

(Caption 2- BMUs play a role in fish marketing)



BMU Assembly meeting



## Focus Group Discussion between Scientists and BMU



## Results

- Over 70% of respondents were registered with the BMUs, with Lakes Victoria and Albert registering the highest numbers. The failure to register was due to: high level engagement in illegal fishing practices, migrations as well as the lack of interest partly due to the fact that some BMU executive members were also engaged in illegal fishing practices.
- Over 60% had attended a BMU meeting in the last 6 months where the main issue discussed was fisheries management. Failure to attend meetings was due to: being absent, lack of interest and lack of information about meeting dates.
- Since most of the fishers who are not registered with their BMUs are engaged in illegal fishing, they voted in BMU leaders who could condon illegal fishing practices.
- Main activities carried out by the BMUs were: sensitising fishers, lake patrols, confiscating illegal gears, fish marketing and enforcing sanitation
- Most fishers on Lakes Kyoga (72%), Victoria (80%) had received special training, mainly, in fisheries management, how a BMU should operate and financial management. The frequency of such trainings was however low.
- The main sources of BMU finances included: 25% Fish Movement Permit remittance from local governments, one head of fish or its equivalent as well as fines and boat levies.
- Whereas it is a requirement for all BMUs to open bank accounts and declare BMU finances to the BMU assembly, more than 50% of the respondents were not aware whether their BMUs had bank accounts and how BMUs spent their finances.

## BMU Challenges

Major challenges of BMUs were: inadequate funds to facilitate BMU operations and lack of remuneration to BMU committee members, migratory nature of fishers, resistance from fishers especially those using illegal gears, cross-border conflicts, political interference and failure on the part co-management stakeholders to understand one another's roles and limits.

## Conclusion

Although BMUs have played a considerable role in fisheries management, there are still challenges that need to be addressed in order to see have an impact .

## Recommendation:

- All BMU Assembly meeting days should be declared "no fishing days".
- Failure to attend BMU meetings without apology should attract fines and penalties.
- The people who are not registered with BMUs should strictly not be allowed to do fishing
- Extension of BMU office term limits from 2 to at least 4 years should be considered such that trained BMU officers have time to implement what they learn in trainings.
- Need to continuously train and sensitise the different co-management stakeholders on their roles and limits.
- Need for coordination of BMUs, districts and countries sharing the water bodies
- BMUs need more financial resources to buy equipments for fisheries law enforcement as well as get facilitation for their work and time spent on fisheries management more especially on patrols.
- Need for restricted access to the fishery in order to maintain an optimum number of fishers.

## References

NFP (2004), Fish (Beach Management) Rules 2003, MAAIF, (2003), Rules, 2001 No.73 Statutory Instrument Act, By-laws of the BMU (LVFO, 2007 and MAAIF, 2003). , (LVFRP, 2000), Ikwaput, (2003), Kamuturaki, (2006) LVFRP, (2000),