

*A play of voices in marine conservation*  
**Human experiences of fishery  
closures in Zanzibar**

*Mchezo unaotumia sauti katika uhifadhi wa bahari*  
**Uzoefu wa binadamu kuhusu  
kufungwa kwa uvuvi, Zanzibar**



Based on stories [written by Elizabeth \(Liz\) Drury O'Neill](#). These stories were directly taken from the research transcripts of OctoPINTS' fieldwork in 2019. The stories were edited into a play by Tim Daw and Emilie Lindkvist. Kiswahili translation was made by Irene Musa and Andrew Wamukota. Layout and editing by Jineth Berrío-Marínez. Front page illustration by Krisztina Jónás.

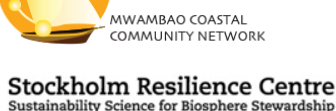
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Mchezo unapatikana kwa Kiingereza na Kiswahili.

This play script provides the setting of a scene which includes dialogues and actions of different characters in a small-scale fishery context. It represents a fictional performance of what some fishery actors say and feel about periodic octopus closures in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The script was originally created for the feedback sessions within the OctoPINTS project in June 2022, and now, it is available online so that everyone is welcome to read or even adapt it for their own purposes.



*Play-reading during the OctoPINTS feedback sessions in Zanzibar in June 2022.*

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# A play of voices from Zanzibari Fishery Closures

Hello and welcome to this play script prepared by [the OctoPINTS project](#), an interdisciplinary research project carried out by the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Pwani University, Kenya and Stockholm University in Sweden.

## Some background info

The play script was written using fictional stories based on [field visits to local coastal communities across Zanzibar](#). The characters of the play and stories are not real, they are fictional but the bulk of the words and voices come from translated interactions with research participants. The words, actions and thoughts represent the views and opinions of the different fishers, traders and Shehia Fishery Committee (SFC) members we worked with back in 2019. We mixed their voices together to create a [storytelling series](#) and this script, thus anybody we talked to cannot be personally identified. The play was originally written in English, translated into Kiswahili and then read by the OctoPINTS team and volunteers from a local NGO during the [research feedback sessions](#) we did in Zanzibar in June 2022. Now, we would like to broadly share the script so that everyone can use it to stage the play or adapt it for their own purposes.

## About the play script & performance

This play aims to create a safe space for discussion and reflection on how the periodic octopus closure intervention is experienced and understood for various social groups in a small-scale fishery context. The fictional characters include two (2) male skin divers, one (1) footfisher woman (fisherwomen), one (1) traderwoman and (1) traderman, and one (1) Sheha (the village head). In the script, those characters are distinguished in **CAPITAL LETTERS** and **bold** followed by their corresponding dialogues. The *stage directions* or how each character moves on stage and feels, can be found below each role in *italic* and contained with brackets []. Here, we include both versions of the play script: English (in black) and Kiswahili (in dark gray) so that it can be easily read and performed in any of those languages. Script readers or actors could also use specific props such as snorkeling masks, wooden sticks and buckets to better represent the corresponding roles. The performance should be followed by an open discussion, where both actors and audience can freely share their ideas, perceptions and thoughts.

**Characters & venue:** Find six (6) participants to read aloud the script and act in front of an audience. Make sure you choose an appropriate venue with enough space, ventilation, good acoustics and light.

**Optional props:** Snorkeling masks, wooden sticks and buckets.

**Performance length:** about 10-15 min.

*Let the play begin!!*



## OctoPINTS play script

### Setting

*A coastal fishing community that depends heavily on marine resources for income, livelihoods and nutrition in the Western Indian Ocean.*

*Jumuiya ya wavuvi wa pwani ambayo inategemea sana rasilimali za baharini kwa mapato na lishe katika Bahari ya Hindi ya Magharibi.*

### Time

*A committee meeting, daytime, the present. We open our play at the village school where villagers have gathered to discuss the octopus closure.*

*Mkutano wa kamati, mchana, sasa. Tunafungua mchezo wetu katika shule ya kijiji, wakati wanakijiji wamekaa kujadili ufungwaji wa maeneo ya pweza.*

### Character descriptions

**SHEHA:** Village leader.

**SHEHA:** Msimamizi wa Shehia.

**TRADERWOMAN:** She buys or catches the octopus, and then she can fry it and sell it in the village or she also can make really good octopus soup, again for sale in the village. In any case, traderwomen are dealing with much smaller amounts of octopus compared to the male traders.

**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA:** Ananunua pweza, kisha anawakaanga na kuuza vipande vipande kijijini au hutengeneza supu nzuri, tena kwa kuuza kijijini. Kwa hali yoyote, wanawake wafanyabiashara hununua na kuuza kiasi kidogo cha pweza ikilinganishwa na wafanyabiashara wa kiume.

**TRADERMAN:** He buys the octopus, and then he typically keeps it on ice or freezes it and through agents and companies exports it to Kenya. From here it can go to Portugal or Italy or other places in the EU.

**MFANYABIASHARA:** Hununua pweza, kisha, kwa kawaida kuwaweka kwenye barafu au kenye friji, na kupitia mawakala na makampuni, huhamisha nje ya nji na kuwauza katika mataifa ya Ureno au sehemu nyingine kama Italia au maeneo mengine katika Umoja wa Ulaya.

**FISHERWOMAN:** She can fish in shallow waters by foot using sticks and spears, not going out of her depth.

**MWANAMKE MVUVI:** Anaweza kuvua katika maji ya kina kifupi kwa miguu kwa kutumia vijiti na mikuki asitoke nje ya kina chake.

**SKIN DIVER 1 AND 2:** The free divers target octopus the most compared to other octopus fishers. Skin divers use masks, fins and spears and/or spear guns.

**MZAMIAJI 1 na 2:** Wazamiaji huru hulenga pweza zaidi ikilinganishwa na wavuvi wengine wa pweza. Wazamiaji huru hutumia barakoa, mapezi na mikuki/bunduki.



## Act One

### Scene One

*[Characters sit around stage gossiping inaudibly to one another, laughing etc]*

*[Wahusika wanakaa jukwaani wakishiriki umbea bila kusikika, wakicheka nk]*

**TRADERWOMAN**

Listen, the sheha is about to open the meeting.

**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Msikilizeni, sheha anakaribia kufungua mkutano.

*[everyone hushes and pays attention]*

*[kila mtu ananyamaza na kuzingatia]*

**SHEHA**

Good day. Today we have gathered different kinds of people to decide what we will do about the closure. We have fishers, divers, mamma's who also catch and cook and sell octopus, and men who buy and sell octopus. Nothing comes without challenges, there is no work that is perfect, so we need to hear what is good, what is not good and agree together, what we need to do. Thank you for coming to share your views and listen. Who would like to start and share their experiences?

**SHEHA**

Assalama alekum. Leo tumekusanyika watu wa aina mbalimbalia ili kuamua tutafanya nini kuhusu ufungaji wa maeneo ya pweza. Tunao wavuvi, wazamiaji, akina mama ambao pia huvua na kupika na kuuza pweza, na wanaume ambao hununua na kuuza pweza. Hakuna kinachokuja bila changamoto, hakuna kazi ambayo ni kamilifu, kwa hiyo tungependa kusikia kipi kizuri, na kipi kisicho kizuri na kukubaliana kwa pamoja, nini tunahitaji kufanya. Asanteni kwa kuja kushiriki maoni yenu na kusikiliza. Nani angependa kuanza na kutoa maoni yake?

**TRADERWOMAN**

I myself and other octopus traderwomen or vendors like me, we did not support this thing. But after we traderwomen witnessed the opening, the richness there, we supported, we are still grateful. Grateful to God. The increase in octopus sizes are good for business, for frying or boiling. It's better for chopping to make my kebabs. I can also keep the extra in the freezer and then keep them to sell. The selling also means I can get good ingredients for the octopus soup I sell, it's good for customers. I can give them tasty soup for cheaper prices. I provide happiness!



## **MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Mimi Mwenyewe na wafanyabiashara wengine wa pweza au wachuuzi kama mimi hatukuunga mkono jambo hili. Lakini baada ya sisi wafanyabiashara kushuhudia ufunguzi, na utajiri uliopo pale, tuliunga mkono, bado tunashukuru, tunamshukuru Mungu. Kuongezeka kwa ukubwa wa pweza ni nzuri kwa biashara, kwa kukaanga au kuchemsha. Ni bora kwa kukata na kutengeneza kababu zangu. Ninaweza pia kuhifadhi ziada kwenye friji na kuuza. Ninaweza pia kupata viungo kwa ajili ya supu ya pweza ninayouza, ni nzuri kwa wateja. Ninaweza kuwapa supu yenye ladha nzuri kwa bei nafuu. Nawaburudisha!

## **FISHERWOMAN**

Yes I agree with you dada, the closure was good, and the benefits are good. I could help my children with their school fees from the octopus I caught at the opening. Our debts could be paid and the mosque might get a new roof.

## **MWANAMKE MVUVI**

Ndio nakubaliana na wewe dada. kufungwa kwa maeneo ya pweza kulikuwa kuzuri, na faida ni nzuri. Naweza kuwalipia watoto wangu ada ya skuli kutokana na kipato wakati wa kufungua. Madeni yetu yangaweza kulipwa, na msikiti unaweza kupata paa jipya.

## **TRADERMAN**

The big octopus was good, but we traders are paying the cost at the opening because we pay the levy and others do not.

## **MFANYABIASHARA**

Pweza wakubwa walikuwa wazuri, lakini sisi wachuuzi tunagharamika wakati wa ufunguzi kwasababu tunalipa ushuru na wengine hawalipi.

## **Scene two**

### **SKIN DIVER 1**

When you are the diver you see what is going on in the sea, this is good, this is bad, this is looking good, this is destroyed. We were brought comfort by the closures because there was coral, fish, octopus eggs, reproductive areas. We didn't expect the environment to change like that ... on the day we opened I benefited because the octopus was 2kg, 3kg and above.

### **MZAMIAJI 1**

Unapokuwa mzamiaji unaona kinachoendelea baharini, hiki ni kizuri, hiki ni kibaya, hiki kiko vizuri, hiki kimeharibiwa. Tulifarajika na ufungaji kwa sababu



kulikuwa na matumbawe, samaki, mayai ya pweza na sehemu ya kuzalisha. Hatukutegemea mazingira kubadilika kiasi kile, siku tuliyofungua nilifaidika kwasababu pweza alikuwa kilo mbili, kilo tatu na zaidi.

**SKIN DIVER 2**

Remember when Ali Said caught a 6kg octopus at the second opening!

**MZAMIAJI 2**

Unakumbuka Ali Said alipovua pweza mmoja mwenye kilo sita wakati wa ufunguzi wa pili!

**FISHERWOMAN**

Men enter at high tide on the opening day before the official opening comes, when we can't enter as we can't swim.

**MWANAMKE MVUVI**

Wanaume wanaingia maji ya shingo (kwenye wimbi kubwa) siku ya ufunguzi kabla ya muda uliopangwa wa ufunguzi kufika, ambapo hatuwezi kuingia maana hatuwezi kuogelea.

**SKIN DIVER 1**

When God shuts this door he opens the other door, somehow there is benefit, somehow loss. This is how I see these octopus closures, this is how people get, there are others who get many, others get few, but this is God's wish.

**MZAMIAJI 1**

Mungu anapofunga mlango hufungua mlango mwingine, kwanamna fulani kuna faida, kwa namna nyingine kuna hasara. Hivi ndivyo ninavyoona huu ufungaji wa maeneo pweza, hivi ndivyo watu hupata, kuna wanaopata kingi, wengine wanapata kidogo, lakini huu ni mpango wa Mungu.

**FISHERWOMAN**

But, little by little, people started to go in to take octopus from the closure. This made me angry.

**MWANAMKE MVUVI**

Lakini kidogo kidogo, watu walianza kwenda huko na kuchukua pweza kutoka kwa sehemu iliyo fungwa. Hili lilinikasirisha.

**FISHERWOMAN**

It is mostly men, they are so arrogant, this is insulting to us fisherwomen, if the octopus is yours, God will give it to you.

**MWANAMKE MVUVI**

Mara nyingi ni wanaume, wanakiburi sana, hututukana sisi wavuvi wanawake. Kama pweza ni wako, Mungu atakupa.

**TRADERWOMAN**

Yes, poachers, mainly skin divers "Kalipso" have been taking octopus at night, they make us suffer, they remove benefits from others by doing this. It hurts us, it isn't fair. If we are closing we need to all tolerate it



together, it hurts when we keep together and don't fish and then those few go against. Us who do the work don't benefit in the end.

**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Ndio, zaidi sana madaiva "Kalipso" wamekuwa wakivua pweza usiku, wanatufanya tuteseke, wanafaidika kuliko wengine, kwa kufanya hivi. Inatumiza, sio sawa. Kama tunafungia tunatakiwa tuvumilie sote kwa pamoja, inaumiza tunapowekesa pamoja na hatuvui halafu hao wachache wanaenda kinyume. Sisi tuliofanya kazi hatufaidiki mwishoni.

**SKIN DIVER 1**

We divers feel this blame, we feel untrusted, are people jealous of our skill and ability? They blame the divers because they feel envious of us, they think we are the ones who benefit much, we are few and those who go fishing octopus on foot are many, when the water level is high they cannot go, we can. They don't trust the divers. They become greedy, when they see the many octopus at the openings they think to themselves that if there is octopus here in the shallows imagine the plenty in the deep, where the divers go. At Ramadhan they laugh together because they know that the we the divers don't dive, they become so happy.

**MZAMIAJI 1**

Sisi wapiga mbinzi huhisi lawama hii, tunahisi hatuaminiki, je, wanatuonea wivu kwa uwezo na ujuzi wetu?. Wanalaumu wazamiaji kwasababu wanatuonea wivu, wanadhani sisi ndio tunafaidika zaidi, tupo wachache na wavuvi wa miguu ni wengi, kwenye maji ya shingo hawawezi kwenda, sisi tunaweza. Hawatuamini wapiga mbinzi. Wanakuwa wachoyo, wakiona pweza ni wengi kwenye ufunguzi wanajiuliza wenyewe kwamba kama hapa kwenye kina kifupi kuna pweza hivi je fikiria huko kwenye kina kirefu wanapokwenda wazamiaji. Kipindi cha Ramadhani wanacheka pamoja maana wanajua sisi madaiva hatuzamii, wanafurahia sana.

**TRADERMAN**

Yes. Conflict builds up and relationships are soured.

**MFANYABIASHARA**

Ndio. Migogoro hujengeka na mahusiano yanaharibika.

**TRADERWOMAN**

I remember people arguing at the Mosque, even at burials, about the project, the octopus and the thieves. It reached a place where people even hated each other.





**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Nakumbuka watu walipokuwa wakibishana msikitini hata kwenye maziko kuhusu mradi, pweza na wezi. Ilifikia mahali ambapo hata watu walichukiana.

**SKIN DIVER 1**

The closure is hard for us because we depend on the octopus landings more than anyone. God brings the coast to us so that we can use it for our own benefits.

**MZAMIAJI 1**

Ufungaji ni mgumu kwetu, kwasababu tunategemea uvuvi wa pweza zaidi, kuliko mtu yoyote. Mwenyezi Mungu ametuletea pwani ili tuitumie kwa manufaa yetu.

**SHEHA**

Young man, are we authorized to use everything as we wish simply because they are brought by God? Or are we using them wisely so that these resources will be sustainable?

**SHEHA**

Bwana mdogo, tuna mamlaka ya kutumia kila kitu kama tunavyopenda kwa sababu tu vimeletwa na Mwenyezi Mungu? Au tunavitumia vyema ili raslimali hii idumu na iendelee kuwepo?

**SKIN DIVER 1**

But it is not only those within the village who steal octopus, but migrating fishers with destructive nets, and our neighbors who sneak into the closures at night. These outsiders should be properly dealt with first.

**MZAMIAJI 1**

Lakini sio wanakijiji tu wanao iba pweza, ila wavuvi wahamiaji wenye nyavu zenye uharibifu, na majirani zetu wanaoingia eneo lililofungwa usiku kuiba. Hawa wageni wanatakiwa kushughulikiwa ipasavyo kwanza.

## Final Act

*[Characters start to become more animated and step forward as they say their views – the sense of a range of different views and voices]*

*[Wahusika wanaanza kuhuishwa zaidi na kusonga mbele wanapotoa maoni yao - hisia ya anuwai ya maoni na sauti tofauti]*

**TRADERWOMAN**

We need more investment to strengthen the patrols, punishments need to happen to those who break the rules, there needs to be follow up and the fines need to be big enough to discourage.

**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Tunahitaji kuwekeza zaidi kwenye doria, adhabu zitolewe kwa wanaovunja sheria, kuwepo na



**SKIN DIVER 2**

utekelezaji wa kufualitia faini kubwa kiasi cha kuwakatisha tamaa.

We need a reliable market for octopus, we are selling very low, research should be done into how the market will be.

**MZAMIAJI 2**

Tunahitaji soko la kuaminika, la pweza. Mauzo yapo chini sana, utafiti lazima ufanyike kwa namna soko litakavyokuwa.

**SHEHA**

We need the collaboration of the central Government. This is an issue of agreement and satisfaction. We tried to agree the fine but they didn't pay it.

**SHEHA**

Tunatakiwa kuwa na ushirikiano na serikali kuu. Hili ni swala la makubaliano na maridhiano. Sisi kamati tulijaribu kupitisha faini na kutekeleza ulipaji wa faini lakini walikataa kulipa.

**TRADERMAN**

We should just leave the coast open and we will see what happens.

**MFANYABIASHARA**

Tunapaswa tu kuacha pwani wazi na tutaona nini kitatokea.

**TRADERWOMAN**

But a coast that is not closed, an area without closures, has no development, any area that has a closure will have good success, the benefits will be in the community, but also with the NGO and the Government.

**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Lakini pwani ambayo halijafungwa haina maendeleo, eneo lolote lililofungwa litapata mafanikio mazuri, manufaa yatakuwepo katika jamii, lakini pia kwa jumumia (NGO) na serikali.

**FISHERWOMAN**

We need stronger leaders to train us, who could explain to us the profit and loss obtained from the octopus closure. When that kind of education will be provided within the village, everybody will understand and we will agree.

**MWANAMKE MVUVI**

Tunahitaji viongozi shupavu kutuelimisha, ambao watatufananulia faida na hasara iliyopatikana kutokana na kufungwa kwa pweza. Elimu ya namna hiyo ikitolewa katika kijiji, kila mtu ataelewa na tutakubali.

**TRADERWOMAN**

We have many coasts, when you close here in this one, you will get other places, it is the richest country but we make it poor because we don't have agreements.



**MWANAMKE MFANYABIASHARA**

Tuna pwani nyingi, unapofungia hapa, napata maeneo mengine, ni nchi tajiri zaidi ila tunaifanya kuwa maskini kwa sababu hatuna mikataba.

**The End**

**Mwisho**

### ***Discussion session***

Open the floor for discussion and reflection on the story and characters of the play. Invite the participants to express their ideas and thoughts, and to actively listen to each other. There are no right or wrong opinions, there are no answers for what should or should not happen. Remember that this play script includes different voices of fictional characters from Zanzibari marine conservation experiences but based on the real words of this involved. Maybe what they have to say resonates with other experiences of marine conservation in other parts of the world.