

East African Sustainability Watch Network

And

**The East African Communities' Organization for Management of Lake
Victoria Resources (ECOVIC - Uganda Chapter)**

BEACH MANAGEMENT UNITS: *UGANDA'S EXPERIENCE*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Beach Management Units (BMUs) are community fisheries management institutions, legally empowered and registered with the Department for Fisheries Resources. Fishers are required to be registered with BMU in order to be allowed to work in fisheries. Every BMU has an Assembly of all registered members and an elected Committee. The process of forming and registering a BMU is set out in the Harmonized BMU Guidelines, which are implemented at the national level (LVFO 2005). The Guidelines set out the composition of the committee as including representation from the four stakeholder groups, namely boat owners, boat crew, fishmongers and the others category, with at least three members being women. This is intended to promote equity of stakeholders and ensure that all stakeholders, including the traditionally marginalized and poorer within fishing communities, namely women and boat crew, to have a say in decision-making.

A total of 355 BMUs have been established on Ugandan landing sites on Lake Victoria since the concept of co-management was introduced in the region in the late 1990s. The Statutory Instrument, the Fish (Beach Management) Rules 2003, provided legal empowerment of BMUs for fisheries planning and management in partnership with Local Governments. The new law and its accompanying Guidelines set out the function of the BMU as well as the roles of the BMU Assembly and the BMU Committees (GoU 2003a). The BMU is charged with the responsibility of fisheries management in partnership with Central and Local Government Department or Institution responsible for fisheries regulations and control. In pursuit of this function, BMUs have been involved in a range of activities, including enforcing fisheries regulations, development planning and data collection, among others.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to assess the performance of BMUs in Uganda since their inception, with a view to extracting lessons to improve their future performance. The paper draws on the information provided mainly under NaFIRRI, LVFO, DFR and the Local Governments.

2. BACKGROUND

Management of the fisheries of Lake Victoria is considered essential in order to ensure optimum levels of production from the resource base, through effective regulations. Through management, some of the key resource problems threatening the sustainability of the fisheries can be addressed. This is necessary to ensure that the livelihoods of the fishery dependent communities are sustained and further improved.

Management of Lake Victoria fisheries is based on stipulated sets of rules and regulations, which fishing communities are expected to adhere to and for which they are liable for punishment in case of disobedience (GoU 1964).

A historical perspective of the management regime of the fisheries of Lake Victoria reveals that a centralised management strategy applied in Uganda over several decades (MAAIF 2004). The strategy was, however, not successful, resulting in substantial quantities of un-recommended and banned gear remaining in use, as well as catching of significant proportions of immature fish. This situation has been attributed to the existing state-based management regime that was characterized by inadequate logistical support and financial provisions for the Department of Fisheries Resources to carry out fisheries

management. Other problems included apathy, corruption, low staffing levels of the Department, the sheer size of the lake and low morale among staff. In addition, there was low involvement of resource users in fisheries management as a result of weak community institutions (UNECIA, 2001).

Consequently, co-management has been introduced, as an alternative strategy for more effective management of the fisheries (GoU 2003b). Co-management is defined as a partnership between the state and the user groups under which the responsibility and roles are shared, for effective fisheries management. The main advantages of co-management are that it is cost-effective and it provides power to the fishing communities to decide on wise use of the resources, in which they have a stake. The objective of introducing co-management in Uganda was to improve fishers' livelihoods through improved planning and resource management, good governance, democratic participation and self reliance.

However, for resource users to effectively participate in resource co-management, there is need for an effective community-based institution. Ostrom (1990) and Pinkerton (1989) suggest the conditions that must prevail for successful resource regulation under co-management. The conditions relate to appropriate institutional framework for governing common property resources and to organisation of the user groups for collective action. They include clearly defined boundaries and membership, group cohesion; benefits exceeding costs; participation by those affected; management rules enforced; local rights to organise; co-operation and leadership at community level; decentralisation and delegation of authority and co-ordination between government and community. An assessment of these conditions revealed that some of them already existed on Lake Victoria to varying degrees while others would need to be created (Odongkara, 2001).

3. OBJECTIVE

The broad aims of BMUs in Uganda are outlined in the Law (GoU 2003) and they include:

- a) Provide a legally empowered institutional framework that brings together all fisheries stakeholders, including the poor and marginalised, and actively involve them in decision-making for the sustainable management of fisheries resources;
- b) Provide fisheries stakeholders with an officially recognised organisational role in partnership with local governments and the State in the co-management of fisheries resources in accordance with prevailing policies and laws;
- c) Improve the welfare and livelihood of people in fisheries dependent communities through improved planning and resource management, good governance, democratic participation and self-reliance.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF BMUS ON LAKE VICTORIA

The development of BMUs on Lake Victoria, Uganda has gone through a number of phases as outlined below:

LVFRP Pilot BMU

A number of pilot co-management initiatives were conducted under the Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project (LVFRP) in the three riparian states in 2000-2001. In Uganda, Nkombe Landing Site in Mayuge District was selected. Using PRA, a situational analysis was carried out and action plan developed in a participatory manner by the community with guidance of the project. Participatory monitoring of implementation of the action plan was carried out over a one-year period, after which lessons were extracted.

The pilot did not benefit from external funding, legal backing, guidelines, training or mentoring and was basically a community driven undertaking.

The main achievement of the pilot was the internal development of by-laws governing the fisheries and the Nkombe society and how the community effectively implemented it because they owned it.

UFFCA BMUs

The Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association (UFFCA) in collaboration with Central and Local governments, was the first NGO to be involved in establishing BMUs on Lake Victoria, Uganda in 2003. A total of 13 BMUs were set up in selected fishing villages in Rakai, Masaka, Kampala and Busia Districts.

The main challenge faced by UFFCA was the existence of several community institutions within the landing sites, with different and often conflicting interests, namely the Local Councils (LCs), traditional head fishermen, also known as "Gabungas," Landing Site Management Committees and the Fisheries Task Forces put in place to address fish poisoning problem. All these bodies purportedly were working to serve the interest of the fishing communities but there was no co-ordination and their activities were not harmonized and conflict was ripe among them (Kamuturaki, 2006). Other challenges included:

- i) Lack of unity at landing sites where BMUs were being formed.
- ii) Weak interest groups, such as women and youth, from which representations to the BMUs were drawn, hence the BMU committee members found themselves with no constituents to represent.
- iii) Over-committed leaders who could not find time for BMU work.
- iv) Lack of planning capacity.

UFFCA also initially did not have the benefit of guidelines for formation and operation of BMUs, as these guidelines were finalized later.

The key lesson learnt from the UFFCA experience was that structures should not be imposed prematurely on community but rather built through gradual action.

LVEMP BMUs

As part of the Fisheries Management Component of the Lake Victoria Environment Management Project (LVEMP), a strong aspect of community participation was the establishment, legal empowerment and capacity building of BMUs. The activity started in 1999 and by 2005, there were 51 LVEMP supported BMUs on Lake Victoria (LVEMP, 2005).

Under LVEMP, the BMUs had the advantage of a clear legal framework, namely the Fish (Beach Management Unit) Statutory Instrument No. 35 of 2003 and were in line with the policy of community participation under the National Fisheries Policy, 2004.

The BMUs benefited from the overall political backing in the country. By accessing 25% remittance of the public revenues they collected, they were potentially sustainable institutions.

BMUs established under LVEMP, however, lacked any comprehensive training programme under the project.

One of the success stories of LVEMP BMUs was Katosi, where the BMU was able to build an office block, provide garbage bins and extend power to the landing site from 100 metres away.

LVFO BMUs

LVFO, with the support of the IFMP project, carried out establishment of up to 355 BMUs in Uganda between 2004 and 2007 (Table 1). The organisation was able to achieve this magnitude of work due to a number of factors:

- i) Conceptualisation of co-management and BMUs had reached higher levels, providing improved understanding to work with.
- ii) Regionally developed and harmonised BMU guidelines were available.
- iii) Substantial funding was available under the EU funded IFMP project.
- iv) Technical assistance was provided by the IFMP project.

Table 1: Number of BMUs by District

District	No. of Landing Sites	No. of BMUs
Bugiri	66	51
Busia	4	2
Jinja	13	6
Kalangala	68	62
Kampala	7	3
Masaka	21	14
Mayuge	55	31
Mpigi	19	15
Mukono	247	138
Rakai	10	6
Wakiso	38	27
Total	548	355

Source: MRAG, 2008

Under the LVFO programme, BMUs were given considerable training and support to build capacity in managing the structures and participating in fisheries

management. The training covered BMU orientation, fisheries management and financial management (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of participants trained, Uganda.

Type of Training	Training of Trainers	BMU Workshops
BMU Orientation	52	1,084
BMU Financial Management	36	708
BMU Fisheries Management	96	13,027

Source: MRAG, 2008

The BMUs were also mentored by fisheries staff and their performance was assessed through annual performance monitoring, carried out in accordance with the Harmonized BMU Guidelines.

LVFO also supported establishment of BMU networks, through which BMUs are able to collaborate with each other, with Government and other stakeholder groups (Table 3). These networks are essential for harmonizing plans and management measures, to prevent and address conflict, and to promote equity and justice between BMUs for all members. BMU Networks have been formed up to the district level, with elected committees with stakeholder composition comparable to that of BMUs at community level.

Table 3: Numbers of BMUs and BMU Networks in Uganda

Number of BMUs	355
Number of Village BMU Networks	--
Number of Sub-county BMU Networks	42
Number of BMU Networks at District level	11

Source: MRAG, 2008

Some of the weaknesses of the LVFO BMU programme were cited as follows:

- i) It was excessively top-down, with little input from the community, hence lack of community ownership of the BMUs.
- ii) The process was rushed and the community did not have sufficient time to move with it.
- iii) Guidelines were often flouted in the process of forming BMUs.
- iv) Landing sites without common interests were often put together to form a BMU.
- v) There was insufficient vetting of candidates with the result that known peddlers of illegalities allegedly found their way to the chairmanship of BMUs.
- vi) Mentoring was done by Fisheries staff, some of whom had not themselves received the training.

Current BMU status in Uganda

Available information reveals that the 355 BMUs serving 548 landing sites, have total membership of 64,130 with average of 209 members and 11.5 committee members per BMU (Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of BMU Membership and Committee Data

Total number of landing sites	548
Total number of BMUs	355
Total number of BMU members	64,130
Total number of men	50,885 (79%)
Total number of women	13,245 (21%)
Total number of boats	13,843
Number of boat owners	11,345
Number of boat crew	32,969
Number of traders	7,252
Number of processors	4,038
Number of others	7,698
Average number of members per BMU	209
Average number of boats per BMU	53
Number and % of men on BMU committees	2,487 (75%)
Number and % of women on BMU committees	813 (25%)
Av. no. of BMU committee members/ BMU	11.5

Source: MRAG, 2008

5. BMU MEMBERSHIP, UNDERSTANDING AND EXPECTATIONS

It is a legal requirement that all persons engaged in fisheries-related activity at an officially gazetted or designated fish landing site must belong to a BMU (GoU 2003a). Indeed, in a study carried out under the auspices of LVFO, most of the fishers were found to be registered members of their BMUs and had been members for between 3 months to three years (Odongkara *et al*, 2007).

Majority of the fishers including boat owners, boat crew, women and male traders reported that during the latest registration exercise, they were registered as members of the BMUs (Table 5).

Table 5: Respondents registered as BMU members

	Boat owners		Boat crew		Women		Male fish traders	
	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt
Yes	193	98%	174	93%	164	88%	101	97%
No	5	3%	13	7%	23	12%	3	3%
Total	198	100%	187	100%	187	100%	104	100%

Source; Odongkara et al, 2008

The registration process varied across BMUs but was mostly voluntary, with fishers making application to the BMU committees or fisheries officials, who had recorded the names of all people involved in any fisheries activity at a particular landing site. For migrant fishers, transfer letters were often required. In some BMUs, however, people's names were reportedly written without their knowledge.

Generally, there was a fair understanding and interpretation of co-management among Fisheries Department Officials and other Government leaders. However, most fishers did not exhibit a full understanding of the concept of co-management.

Majority of the fishers interviewed indicated that they had joined BMUs for purposes of reducing illegal fishing activities and conflicts at their beaches, accessing support from Government like credit provision, recognition by the local community and leadership while others simply joined because everyone involved in fisheries activities had to be registered.

Fishers' expectations of the BMUs were to improve the social infrastructure of the landing sites, establish income generating projects, reduce or eradicate use of illegal fishing gears, resolve conflicts, collect revenues and improve the general cleanliness at the landing sites. However, they reported that the BMUs had not fulfilled most of their expectations.

Fisheries staff, in particular, expected the BMUs to do the following:

- i) Reduce responsibilities for the Fisheries staff at district and sub-county level.
- ii) Reduce use of illegal gears and fishing as well as piracy.
- iii) Provide training and education to the fisheries communities on sustainable fisheries management.

It has, however, been argued that in some cases, Fisheries staff have abandoned their responsibilities to the BMUs, which the BMUs could not cope with.

6. GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE BMUs

Characteristics of BMU leaders

The BMUs are governed by the chairpersons and the BMU committees, as provided for under the Law (GoU 2003b). Examination of the characteristic and background of the chairpersons and committee members revealed that the leadership of BMUs was dominated by men (Table 6). The low representation of women on the BMU committees was hindering their effective participation and involvement in decision making and planning at beach level.

Table 6: Sex of the BMU leaders

	Committee members	Chairpersons
Male	74%	100%
Female	27%	--
Total	100%	100%

Source: Odongkara et al., 2007

The average age of a BMU chairperson was 40 years while the mean age of a BMU committee member was 37 years (Table 7). This shows that although the fishing communities consist primarily of youthful people, the leadership is provided by mature people.

Table 7: Age of BMU leaders

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Committee members	68	23	59	37
Chairpersons	33	28	69	40

Source: Odongkara et al, 2007

Available data on educational levels reveals that more chairpersons and committee members fall within the incomplete secondary education level than other levels (Chart 1). Most of the BMU leaders were, therefore, relatively educated, which could have a positive impact on their management capability.

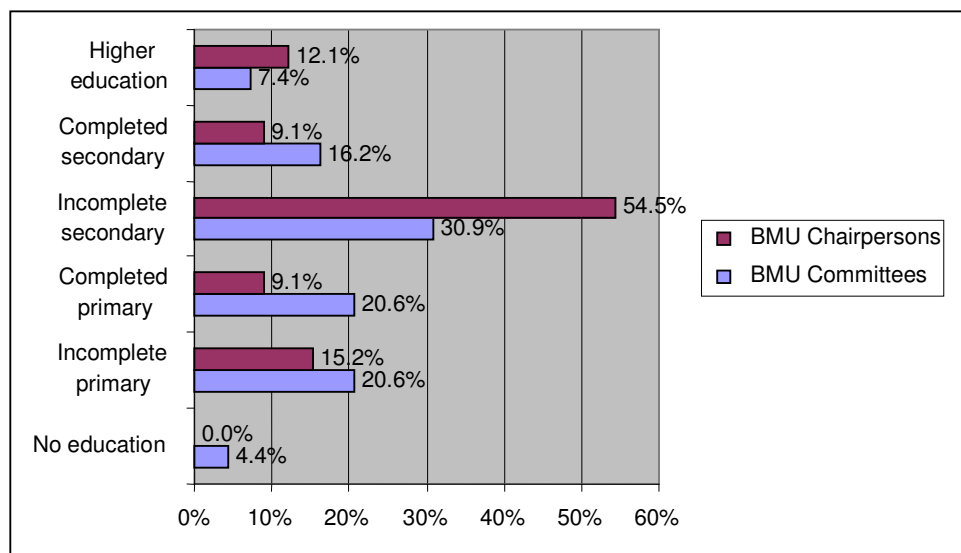


Chart 1: Level of education of BMU Committee members

Source: Odongkara et al, 2007

The data further revealed that the majority of both the BMU committee members (44%) and BMU chairpersons (79%) were boat owners followed by fish traders (Table 8). This shows that boat owners and traders commanded more respect and authority among the fishing communities than other categories within the fisheries.

Table 8: Main occupation of BMU leaders

	Committee members	Chairpersons
Boat owner	44%	79%
Boat crew	21%	---
Fish trader	21%	21%
Fish processor	12%	---
Boat and net repairer	3%	---
Total	100%	100%

Source: Odongkara et al, 2007

BMU committee formation

Formation of BMU committees was examined and it was observed that despite the clear provisions on the Guidelines on how to constitute them, different BMUs have formed the committees in different ways as follows:

- i) Nominations of candidates for committee positions were made and elections held in which fishers lined up behind their preferred candidates. (This was the majority of cases).
- ii) The BMU chairmen were elected and thereafter, they just picked their committee members without involvement of ordinary fishers.
- iii) Representatives to the committees elected by the different fisher groups to which they belonged, as the Law provides.

BMU elections received good attendance among boat owners, boat crew, the women and male fish traders, majority of whom reported that they voted in the last BMU elections (Table 9).

Table 9: Fishers' participation in the BMU Committee elections

	Boat owners		Boat crew		Women		Male fish traders	
	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt
Yes	179	90%	149	80%	140	76%	90	87%
No	19	10%	37	20%	44	24	14	14%
Total	198	100%	186	100	184	100	104	100%

Source: Odongkara et al, 2008

The main considerations the fishers had in voting a candidate to the committee were:

- i) Responsible and trust worthy
- ii) Had good leadership skills
- iii) Had been involved in fisheries for a long time
- iv) Was a friend or a relative
- v) No other woman was capable.

The reasons why candidates stood for elections on the executive committee and whether committee members could stand for elections again were examined. It was reported that there were various reasons that prompted people to stand for those elections, including:

- i) To strengthen leadership where the previous management regime had been characterized as weak.
- ii) Individual trust and ability to work.
- iii) Nominated and appointed by the BMU committee and assembly.
- iv) Have experience in managing people and implementing Government plans.
- v) To mobilize women for development so as to improve their incomes.

It was also established that majority of the chairmen and committee members were willing to stand for elections again for another term of office.

Role played by BMU leaders

The responsibilities of the BMU leaders were identified as follows:

- i) Overseeing the activities of the BMU and co-ordinating with higher authorities at district and sub-county levels
- ii) Resolving conflicts and other problems among fishers at landing sites.
- iii) Improving sanitation at the beaches
- iv) Representing the BMUs in outside meetings and training
- v) Implementing management measures at the landing sites.

However, it was revealed that the majority of committee members did not have the relevant skills for carrying out these roles. However, the BMU chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers had more skills compared to the other committee members, as they were more often invited for training and meetings at district and national levels than the others. It was also reported that BMUs lacked the necessary equipment and facilities for their work.

It was noted that some executive committee positions at some landing sites were vacant; because the members had either voluntarily absconded, migrated to neighbouring landing sites or had died.

Remuneration of BMU committees

BMU committee members were not paid anything directly for their work. On whether they should be paid, how much and by whom, most fishers were in favour of payment of the committee members by Government. The views on how much they should be paid included:

- i) An equivalent of the earnings of the local fisheries staff.
- ii) A percentage (5% to 10%) from the 25% remittances to BMUs from revenue collected.
- iii) An amount not less than Uganda shillings 100,000.

However, the fishers said that payments should only be made to committee members who have worked.

BMUs and politics

Most BMUs did not have strong lineage to politics. Most of the committee members did not have strong ties to politicians and political parties. Exceptional cases were where the BMU chairman was a strong NRM supporter; a BMU vice chairman was also the NRM chairman for the village and another BMU chairman was the LC1 Secretary for Defence in the village. Generally politics had not begun to infiltrate the running of the BMUs.

BMU leaders' compliance to fisheries laws and regulations

Generally BMU leaders were reported to comply with the fisheries laws and regulations. However, at some landing sites, the committee members were strongly engaged in use of illegal gears and also promoted illegal fishing on the lake through reselling of already confiscated gears to other fishers at different landing sites. This is said to have seriously compromised fisheries management.

BMU committee and assembly meetings

Meetings are important fora for collective decision making under participatory management. Examination of the frequency of meetings of BMU executive committees showed varied responses at the different landing sites. Generally, BMU committee meetings were held regularly, with a frequency ranging from 2 weeks to 2 months. However, many ordinary members did not know when the meetings were held or what they discussed.

It was reported that very few BMU committee members asked members about what issues to include in their committee meetings. However, most BMU committees gave feedback to members on some of the issues discussed at committee meetings.

BMU assembly meeting, on the other hand, varied in frequency from monthly to quarterly. They were the main source of information to members. They were also viewed as the most effective way of participating in decision-making and planning at landing site level. However, notices for these meetings were too short.

Agenda items for BMU assembly meetings included:

- i) Feedback from training sessions by committee members
- ii) Illegal fishing and fish trade on the lake
- iii) BMU finances and saving schemes
- iv) Development plans for the BMU e.g. construction of toilets, fish slabs etc.
- v) Payment of boat licenses and other fees

Most fishers reported that they had attended the BMU assembly meetings in the last six months (Table 10). For those who had not attended, the main reason was that they had not been around when the meetings were held.

Table 10: BMU assembly meetings attendance

	Boat Owners		Boat crew		Women		Male fish traders	
	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt	Freq	Percnt
Yes	176	89%	159	86%	138	74%	88	85%
No	21	11%	25	14%	48	26%	16	15%
Total	197	100%	184	100%	186	100%	104	100%

Source: Odongkara et al, 2008

It was reported that people freely expressed their views including poor fishers during assembly meetings at most BMUs. However, the actual functions of the BMU assembly were not clear to most of the fishers. The few fishers who thought they knew the functions of the BMU assembly said they included:

- i) Helping the executive committee in decision making
- ii) Providing support for planning and management of the fisheries at beach level.

7. BMU ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS

What BMUs have done in the last one year

Different BMUs had been involved in a number of activities. The roles they had done over the last year were; enforcement of fisheries rules and regulations followed by improved sanitation and fish handling (Table 11).

Table 11: What the BMUs had done over the last year

What BMU had done	Boat Owners	Boat crew	Women	Male fish traders
Enforced fisheries rules and regulations	29%	28%	31%	33%
Improved sanitation and fish handling	24%	22%	25%	24%
Resolved disputes/conflict at beach	5%	3%	2%	2%
Developed beach infrastructure	6%	11%	5%	15%
Undertook planning and monitoring of beach	10%	9%	13%	12%
Sensitized fishers	19%	13%	15%	12%
BMU bank account opened	2%	2%	1%	1%
Closed area established	---	580%	---	---
Nothing	6%	3%	6%	---
Others	---	3%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Odongkara et al, 2008

Involvement of members in BMU activities

Most fishers reported that they had been involved in different activities of the BMUS, which included:

- i) General cleaning/sanitation activities either directly or by giving money to BMUs with a purpose of cleaning the beach.
- ii) Working together to fight illegal fishing by reporting those involved in illegal fishing, directly participating in patrol with the “wembley” or other patrol teams.
- iii) Attending BMU assembly meetings and contributing ideas.
- iv) Participating in making development plans for beaches.

Those who had not been involved in BMU activities attributed it to the failure of BMU leaders to mobilize people for such activities.

BMU work plans

Most of the BMU chairpersons confirmed that their BMUs had work plans. The development activities covered in the work plans included:

- i) Improving sanitation at beaches, for example through constructing toilets
- ii) Buying patrol boats with an engine for effective lake patrolling
- iii) Constructing BMU office building
- iv) Time schedules for holding BMU committee and assembly meetings.
- v) Means of mobilizing financial resources for BMU activities.
- vi) Mobilizing women to do some activities aimed at fighting poverty.
- vii) Buying furniture and toiletry facilities like brush, gloves etc.
- viii) Planting trees on the lake banks.
- ix) Buying a fish collector container.
- x) Strengthening security at landing sites to ensure safety of their property e.g. through hire of a security guard.

BMU challenges

The problems faced by BMUs in carrying out their duties were diverse, including:

- i) Inadequate co-operation between BMU committee and the assembly.
- ii) Inadequate equipment to carry out work like boats, engines and fuel.
- iii) Conflict in roles with Marine Police and Fisheries staff.
- iv) Inadequate security during patrolling.
- v) Lack of motivation in terms of pay for the work that they did.
- vi) Piracy and theft of fishing equipment, namely gear on the lake
- vii) Being less empowered, BMUs are often undermined by Government authorities.

8. BMU REVENUES AND ACCOUNTS

BMU Revenue collection

Generally, Sub county authorities, BMU committee and the BMU chairmen in agreement with the whole assembly determined the types and amounts of revenues collected during assembly meetings.

There were different types of revenues collected at different landing sites including the 25% remittances on fish movement permit fees collected, one Kilogram/head of fish per boat, one basin of “mukene” and fines imposed on wrongdoers. Many BMUs also participated in collecting the following revenues for Government: fishmonger permits, boat license, fishing license, “empoza”, tendering and market fees.

The people identified to collect revenues were: the BMU chairmen, treasurers and secretaries and any other authorized members of the BMU committee. At most landing sites, BMU treasurers kept the revenue collected. Because of poor record keeping and also because most of the revenue collected was immediately used for specific purposes, the magnitudes of revenues were often not clear to members.

Decision-making on BMU expenditures

BMU Chairmen and BMU committee were reported to be the main decision-makers on how revenues would be used. Others included BMU assembly and district authorities. Different revenues collected were dealt with in different ways at different landing sites.

Fish Movement Permit collections were sent to the sub-county, from which 25% was sent back to the landing sites. The remitted 25% and the other locally generated revenues like fines on wrongdoers were, therefore, used to do the following:

- i) Buying sanitation equipment and helping people in need, for example, people who lost their dear ones and taking back home sick people.
- ii) Renovation of office premises and furniture etc.
- iii) Hosting visitors e.g. by buying them drinks like sodas.
- iv) Developing the landing sites in terms of construction of pit latrines, cleaning the landing sites and constructing roads.
- v) Banked and not used, for some BMUs.
- vi) Some of it allegedly used by collectors to purchase their own gears or other private property.

However, the majority of fishers did not know how the revenues raised were used.

Financial Records

Financial records were presented during BMU committee and assembly meetings. The records varied from BMU to BMU, depending on whether such revenues were collected, how money was kept and how it was spent. They included:

- i) Receipt book, cash book, pass books, banking slips and bank statements
- ii) Records of money contributed from one head of fish and fines.

- iii) Monthly accountability on incomes and expenditures.

However, the quality of financial records were still said to be poor despite the training provided by LVFO.

9. BMUs AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

BMUs have interacted with different categories of Government officials in the course of their work as outlined below:

BMUs and Fisheries Staff

Fisheries Officers have made visits to BMUs at varying frequencies, generally once a week for mainland and once a month for island BMUs. They came to the beaches mainly for the following purposes:

- i) Sensitizing and sharing information with fishers on fisheries related issues
- ii) Confiscating illegal fishing gear
- iii) Recording the catch statistics
- iv) Supervising the fisheries related activities.

Majority of the fisheries staff did not ask for money or fish from BMUs whenever they carried out their routine activities, but frequently, fishers reportedly contributed money which was given to them. At some of the landing sites, the Fisheries Officer allegedly came only when there was a deal.

Fisheries Officers have suggested that in order to strengthen co-management through BMUs, the following should be done:

- i) Continuous mentoring of BMUs especially on documentation, planning and development activities.
- ii) Ensuring that the term of office of BMU leaders is respected.
- iii) Continuing with building capacity of BMUs through training.
- iv) Streamlining legal procedures for BMUs and Local Governments, e.g. whether BMUs should be authorised to collect Government revenue.
- v) Using a single chain of command to ease reporting by BMUs.
- vi) Community Development Officers and other key stakeholders e.g. food vendors at beaches, should be involved in BMUs.

Apart from Local Government Fisheries staff, DFR also supported BMUs in the following ways:

- i) Capacity building, through providing tools for use, supervisory and advisory support.
- ii) Supporting BMU elections to ensure that they are free and fair.

DFR also made consultations with BMUs on what should appear in the plans mainly through workshops.

BMUs and Local Governments

Local Governments officials, namely the LCs, councillors and MPs had helped in construction of access roads, fish slabs and toilets. Other areas were: promotion of sports by donating balls, provision of drugs for health centres and helping in

fighting piracy at beaches. On one of the landing sites visited, their MP had “helped” to remove a “special boat license” that was imposed on fishers by their BMU.

BMUs also co-operated with LCs in the areas of conflict resolution, fighting piracy and theft of property and development planning.

Occasionally, however, there were conflicts with Police over who should carry out operations and patrols. Some politicians also allegedly shielded illegal fishers.

With respect to how Local Governments view how co-management should be improved, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) have suggested the following:

- i) BMUs should not accept being bribed or otherwise compromised to allow landing of immature fish.
- ii) The linkage between BMUs and the lower Local Governments should be strengthened because at the moment they paid all allegiance to the DFOs. This might help to ease mobilization of resources for BMUs to finance their development activities.
- iii) Fishers, BMUs and Local Governments should be sensitized on the different roles of the fisheries stakeholders.

BMUs and traditional authorities

Most of the landing sites no longer have traditional authorities apart from Koko and Kitobo where there were landlords of the beach land who were paid ‘busulu’ by those who occupied plots on those beaches. Concerning relationship between the BMUs and the traditional leaders, most of the BMU chairmen said that BMUs did not have any problems with traditional authorities.

However, the majority of BMU chairmen indicated that their landing sites were not practicing customary law. The absence of customary law at most of the landing sites meant that traditional methods of resource conservation were gradually being lost.

10. LAW ENFORCEMENT BY BMUs

BMU operations and patrols

Although most BMUs have reportedly tried to do operations and patrols, they were insufficient due to inadequate funds to buy fuel, lack of boats and security. Confiscated gears were either burnt or taken to higher authorities like police, which would also bring them back to beaches for burning. Some confiscated gears were, however, reportedly resold after confiscating. The immature fish confiscated was distributed to different people especially at the beaches.

Police and Fisheries Staff response to BMU actions

Police and Fisheries Officers burnt gears confiscated by BMUs publicly at the landing sites while the fishers watched but gave the immature fish to different people to eat. However, BMUs were often frustrated when confiscated gears were allegedly resold to other fishers or even given back to their owners after receiving bribe.

Some of the offenders who asked for forgiveness were forgiven, while others were taken to the Police post along with their illegal gears and immature fish. Other offenders were allegedly given strokes as a punishment.

Despite any conflicts with the Police, BMUs and Fisheries Officers always went to the Police to seek security for operations or patrols. However, at some BMUs, especially where illegal fishing was condoned by the BMUs, they worked independently, as the BMUs feared they might be netted by the Police as well.

BMUs and researchers

It was the view of BMUs leaders that although considerable research activities had been seen at their areas, little information was received by BMUs on the results from the research. Occasionally some BMU leaders were invited to research workshops but they did not provide feedback to the rest of the BMU community. Inability of BMUs to receive research information means that they would continue to contribute to management and development of the fisheries without essential knowledge to carry out these functions.

11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is still inadequate understanding of co-management among members of BMUs as many of them are not able to differentiate BMU committee from BMU assembly membership. Many had registered with their respective BMUs in one way or another. However, in some cases formation of BMU committees did not follow the stipulated BMU guidelines.

Most of the BMUs have not met the expectations of their members, which included among others improving the social infrastructure of the landing site, establishing income generating projects, reducing on the use of illegal fishing gears and generating revenue.

Implementation of BMU activities has been limited mostly to the committees, as many of the assembly members of the BMUs did not view it as their responsibility.

Financial records on revenues collected were accessible to most members of the BMUs, although many BMU members reportedly did not know whether or not their BMUs had bank accounts and how much money was on these accounts.

Most of the training received by the BMUs was organized by DFR, especially for a few members of the BMU committees. These covered BMU orientation, fisheries management and financial management.

BMUs relate widely with Fisheries staff, other Local Government officials and politicians in the course of their work and primarily there is co-operation with them, although cases of conflict are also reported.

Law enforcement by BMUs is done through carrying out operations and lake patrols, jointly with Fisheries staff and Police. Other organs like Marine Police, Maritime security and unknown agencies also carry out patrols, often without consultations with the BMUs.

On the basis of this information, BMU development on Lake Victoria, Uganda would benefit from the following recommendations.

- i) The institutions (DFR, Local Governments) charged with the responsibility of institutionalizing BMUs, as well as the BMUs themselves, should endeavour to improve the rather low understanding of co-management among the different stakeholders, including the roles of the BMUs.

- ii) The capacity of BMUs to generate revenues should be strengthened and opportunities availed to them.
- iii) Efforts should be made to integrate BMUs into the local planning and development processes, much of which affect the fishing communities.
- iv) Supervision of BMUs by the Local Government should be strengthened.
- v) Efforts should be made to enable BMUs access local and national programs such as NAADS.
- vi) Research should provide periodic monitoring of the functioning, achievements and impact of co-management.

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