



LESSONS FROM RESEARCH ON NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR COASTAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION IN TANZANIA

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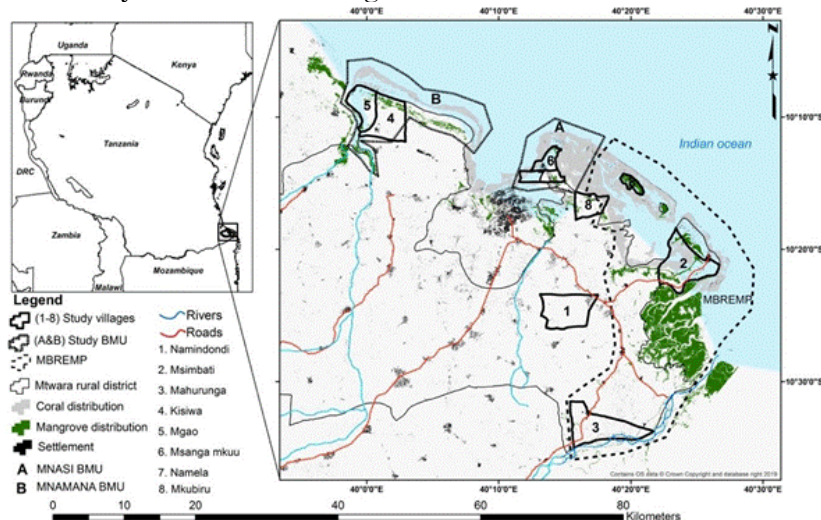
The Challenge

The protection of coastal resources in Tanzania is of great significance because they are of high natural and socio-economic value and are currently facing a range of threats. Many people along the coast are highly dependent on fisheries and other resources such as corals and mangroves. These resources ensure livelihoods, food security and well-being. Increasing human activities are putting these resources at significant risk.

In the recent past, the intensity and extent of uses and activities in coastal areas have grown significantly. This growth presents important challenges to the status of coastal resources, prompting a shift from state-based management to more involvement of local communities, business, researchers and NGOs. The diversity of actors, initiatives, practices, norms, networks and partnerships has led to alternative pathways for engaging resource users. But collaboration between different groups of actors poses serious challenges, as many communities resist limiting access to resources unless they can tap into alternative means of livelihood.

This policy brief presents some of the results of the New Partnerships for Sustainability (NEPSUS) project in view of providing some policy recommendations. In the project, we examined the governance structures, processes and outcomes of two types of partnership: Beach Management Units (BMUs) and the Mnazi-Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP).

Study area: Selected villages within MBREMP and BMUs



Results

1. *Governance challenges.* The introduction of MBREMP and BMUs in Mtwara Rural district does not seem to have yielded the expected outcomes in either. Both face governance challenges related to structural, financial and participatory failures. Structurally, MBREMP has created Village Liaison Committees which are not functioning adequately. They were only incentivized when NGOs had resources to involve them in building awareness, and even then they were seen by villagers as ‘preaching’ instead of helping the local community own the process. While in the setting up of MBREMP the local community was involved, the process was then captured by the central government and local elites. As for BMUs, their committees are functioning in parallel to the Village Environmental Committees and often clash with them and even with the village government. Financially, both MBREMP and the BMUs are currently poorly equipped and the funds accrued from fines and fees are not enough to facilitate the setting up of alternative livelihood activities.

2. *Legitimacy.* Despite deliberate and persuasive efforts to raise awareness on the relevant rules and regulations, both MBREMP and BMUs have struggled to gain and maintain legitimacy. Local communities are yet to perceive these partnerships as responsive, accountable and trustworthy arrangements that are able to strike a delicate balance between community welfare and conservation goals – and this is a crucial limitation for their long-term viability.

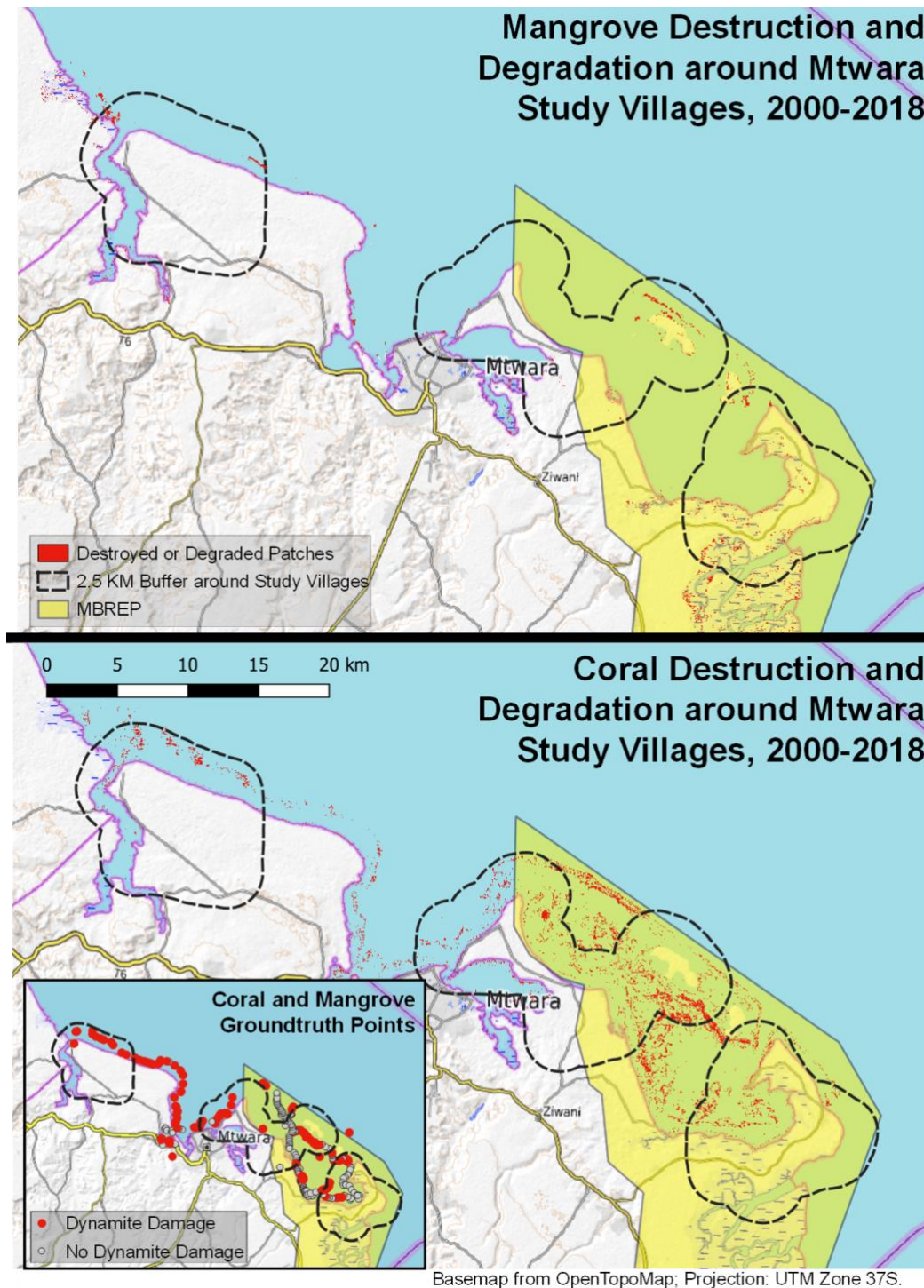


Fish markets in coastal areas of Mtwara Rural district. Photo credit: NEPSUS

3. *Perceptions.* Communities generally perceive these partnerships as focusing on conservation and therefore see them as beneficial only as far as the ecological outcomes are concerned. But communities also see that these partnerships have not been successfully addressing their major social and economic needs, such as the provision of suitable fishing gear. The perceived upswing in fish stocks of late (due to the end of dynamite fishing) is linked to the work of a special task force, not the operation of the BMUs or MBREMP per se. The reported decrease in coral and mangrove use for building is motivated by other factors, such as broader socio-economic change, than the presence of these partnerships. Lack of support for alternative livelihood activities and the possible return of dynamite fishing are still major challenges.

4. *Environmental impacts.* Our analysis of satellite data suggests that coral and mangrove areas off the coast of the study sites in Mtwara and within MBREMP have been relatively stable and indeed are slightly better in 2018 than in 2000. Evidence of dynamite damage is substantially more common outside MBREMP than inside (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Destruction and degradation of coral and mangrove patches around Mtwara study villages



Source: NEPSUS

4. *Overall.* Both MBREMP and BMUs have been facing major challenges and their direct impacts on livelihoods and coastal ecosystems have been minor, although relatively better for BMUs than for MBREMP. The recentralization and securitization of some of the coastal resource management activities has led to the use of ‘task forces’, which actually reinforce existing antagonisms and are not sustainable in the long-term. This general lacklustre performance may be explained by the lack of proper participation from local communities, but also by the duplication of administrative structures that has led to confusion and conflict.

Policy Recommendations

Balancing conservation and livelihoods. The structures of the BMUs and MBREMP need to be revised thoroughly to improve the actual role of communities and fishers in the governance of coastal resources. This could improve a sense of ownership and increase cooperation and trust. The benefits accrued from the income resulting from fees or fines must be transparent and shared broadly, no matter how small, as it would improve stewardship. Another important way to support fishers and limit the pressure on resources near to shore would be to facilitate access to boats and gear to allow them to fish in the deep sea.



Harvested coral in a coastal area of Mtwara Rural district. Photo credit: NEPSUS

Reviewing existing governance structures to ensure that they are fit for purpose. At present, actors and institutions supposed to be collaborating in governing coastal resources lack common structures that could bring them together to define and implement conservation goals. Existing governance arrangements for both MBREMP and BMUs need new mechanisms that can support coordination and collaborative management across sectors and resources. Pursuing a sustainability agenda collaboratively requires structures that allow actors to pool their resources and be represented in decision making.

Information sharing to facilitate a collective, long-term and inclusive approach. There has been a lack of integration of different knowledge systems among the actors involved in partnerships. Some actors, especially women groups and local communities, have not received enough space in planning and designing governance activities. There is a need to develop guidelines on how these actors should be included to ensure that they have a stake and that their voices are heard in designing, planning and implementing coastal resources management plans in both MBREMP and BMUs.

Facilitating support, finance and capacity building. Long-term and consistent financial support is needed, and a better translation of scientific knowledge into local contexts, in view of making local communities feel that the management of coastal resources is also their business.

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