Establishing Fisheries Co-management Areas in Kenya: Integrating Science and Management

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Overfishing and habitat destruction is undermining fisheries, biodiversity, and the long-term sustainability of tropical marine ecosystems worldwide, including Kenya. This has important consequences for local communities who rely on fisheries resources for their livelihoods and food security. Well-designed and effectively managed marine areas, including fisheries co-management areas, are well documented to reduce local threats, and contribute to achieving multiple objectives regarding sustainable fisheries management, biodiversity conservation and adaptation to changes in climate and ocean chemistry. The Kenyan government has provided frameworks within which natural resources including fisheries can be co-managed more sustainably and effectively. In compliance, 10 fisheries Beach Management Units in Pate Island initiated the process of developing co-management plans for their respective areas. A series of community-led marine managed area planning processes were held since 2014 characterized by robust stakeholder consultations and capacity building sessions. These included inputs from latest science that helped inform decisions by fishers to ensure proposed rules/zones achieve desired community benefits. Five different zones were proposed including a multi-use zone, no-take zone, species-specific zone, seasonal closure and gear restriction zone. This paper shares experiences from Pate Island where local communities and partners are taking advantage of the new innovative co-management structures and latest science to design effective fisheries co-management areas.