How gear use affects the income and subjective wellbeing of four Kenyan fishing communities

* S.E. Hardisty, A. De Vos & T. Daw
Rhodes University, South Africa
g14h0165@campus.ru.ac.za

Fishing is an economic activity that is employed along the entire Kenyan coast. However, with an average income of approximately KSH 915 (USD 8.86) per week, and female traders often earning less, only 20.3% of Kenyan fishing households live on or above the poverty line. Reasons for this extreme poverty are not only related to the state of fisheries, but also influenced by a lack of alternative livelihood strategies related to unfavourable climates and low levels of education. These factors interact with rules and institutions that govern fisheries management to ultimately determine livelihoods, income, and well-being. Of particular interest, in this context, is to better understand the impact of gear use restrictions, a key element of fisheries management in protected areas. Different gear types may greatly affect fish yield, so it is unsurprising that there are high tensions between rule enforcers and fishers on this subject, and that banned gears continued to be used. In this project, I aim to better understand how gear use interacts with the monetary and non-material aspects of poverty in coastal Kenya, and attempt to unpack the interactions between fishing gear characteristics such as ethnicity and age. This study builds on knowledge regarding the role of community needs and beliefs in decision making, as well as how context may influence the effectiveness of marine based policies. It represents an important contribution to the growing global discourse on navigating trade-offs in development and conservation in achieving global sustainability goals.