Lessons learned from locally-managed marine area establishment in Northern Mozambique: Our Sea Our Life

WIOMSA topic theme (suggested): Human dimensions of coastal communities

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Background

Northern coastal Mozambique has the highest levels of marine biodiversity in East Africa, with fewer anthropogenic impacts and evidence of resilience to coral bleaching. Human communities here are among the poorest in Mozambique, and highly dependent on marine resources. Increasing development from the gas sector in northern Mozambique in preparation for a scheduled start to production in 2022, and rapid population growth is significantly increasing pressure on this fragile marine biodiversity hotspot.

Methods

Locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) are a key tool to manage the impact of this growth and protect biodiversity. LMMAs can now be legally recognised in Mozambique as
Community Conservation Areas, under Conservation Law 5/2017, but there is little experience of putting this legislation into practice.

Results

Our Sea Our Life is a collaborative project that brings together global and regional expertise in community-based marine conservation in Cabo Delgado. Between 2013-2018, we successfully piloted a scalable, LMMA model in eight villages, benefitting 8,000 people and protecting 10km² of no-take zones and more than 40km² of sustainable-use zones. Enforcement is achieved by the Community Fisheries Council (CCP) members and law enforcement agencies. To ensure successful replication of the approach and to build capacity for LMMA implementation in Mozambique, we have created a toolkit specific to the Mozambique context as a main guide for local practitioners. Now we plan to scale up this approach to make it nationally significant, expanding the network to create 25 legally-recognised LMMAs in northern Mozambique, covering 150km², building resilience in local and migrant communities and protecting vulnerable marine species and habitats.

Conclusion

We will present the challenges and opportunities for implementing LMMAs within Mozambique, emphasising the key lessons learned and recommendations for the future. Specifically, we will cover community engagement in LMMA design; ensuring gender equity in decision-making and benefit sharing; effective involvement of local authorities in remote areas of Mozambique; tackling the issue of migrant fisherfolk; and connecting marine conservation with community needs for financial services and food security.

Key words: LMMAs, replication, toolkit, protected areas