

# **Towards Attaining The BLUE PARK MPA Status: A Case Of The Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Protected Area (KM-MPA) In Kenya**

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## **Submission:**

### **Background**

With less than 3% of the ocean effectively protected, the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas, and marine resources remains a pipe dream. We describe the steps and measures taken by the Kisite-Mpunguti marine protected area (KM-MPA) in Kenya to achieve the highest science-based standards for marine life protection and management (gold level Blue Park Award).

### **Method**

The KM-MPA had regular and consistent monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) of its high biological diversity, which included endemic and IUCN red list threatened species. The management effectiveness of the MPA was then determined using the strategic adaptive management (SAM) tool, and this was followed by needs-directed periodic reviews of the management plan. A Social Assessment of Protected Areas (SAPA) was also conducted to better understand the positive and negative effects of conservation activities in the KM-MPA on the local community's well-being. Community meetings were held to determine site-specific social impacts, while household surveys were conducted to assess the scale of social impact and the quality of governance. Governance statements were themed around participation, transparency, rights, impact mitigation, and benefit sharing.

### **Results**

Positive impacts of the MPA included fish spillover effect (57%), emergency response by KWS to the locals(53%), benefits associated from tourism associated with the MPA(49%), training on swimming and rescue skills to the community(49%), and infrastructural support to the local schools(49%). Negative impacts included human wildlife conflict(68%), confiscation of boats by KWS officials(68%), mistreatment of fishermen by law enforcers(60%), non-existence sharing of benefits between KWS and local community(52%), and slow response of KES officials to address human wildlife conflict(47%). Overall, 50% of all respondents felt KMP increases their wellbeing while a third of all respondents (37%) felt that KMP has no impact on their household's wellbeing. Few respondents (13%) felt that KMP reduces their household's wellbeing. More men felt that KMP improves their wellbeing (+6%), and more men felt that KMP reduces their wellbeing (+4%) in comparison to female respondents.

Several action plans were adopted to address KMNP's negative impacts and strengthen its governance structure. To promote equitable sharing of park benefits, KWS reviewed and advised on methods of generating and utilizing tourism concessions to the local community. The KWS HQ Licensing team, in collaboration

with park staff, educated the community on areas that are eligible for and have the potential for sustainable use and livelihoods. To address the complaint of vessel confiscation, KWS park staff established a safe storage area for vessels and implemented a procedure for regularly inspecting vessels (to ensure no damage/degradation). To foster good community relations, KWS park staff visited communities to learn about community experiences with law enforcement, and KWS park staff met with rangers to discuss the appropriate levels of force during routine vessel interactions and arrests. To address human-wildlife conflict caused by baboons and monkeys, hotspots (coastal forest) were identified, as well as potential responses and deterrents for primates. Other cases involves Sting Rays, Sea Snakes, Stone Fish, Lion Fish and Cone shells, are dealt with accordingly. Furthermore, with the help and collaboration of well-known organizations such as WIOMSA, the UK's international institute for environment and development, and Fauna and Flora International, KM-MPA was able to develop capacity in governance, research, law enforcement, education, and outreach

### **Conclusion**

Our approach emphasizes the importance of MPAs around the world adopting comprehensive strategies and management plans for achieving blue park status, And meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas, and marine resources