

# Fraught with Danger

The sociocultural, economic and policy contexts in Tanzania have made fishers vulnerable to environmental, social and work-related problems

Tanzania is one of the top ten countries with a significant fisheries sector in Africa in terms of total capture-fisheries production. The fishery is categorized into artisanal/small-scale and commercial fisheries. The small-scale fishery comprises inland and coastal marine fisheries in the territorial waters of the Indian Ocean. The commercial fishery is composed of Nile perch fishing in Lake Victoria, prawn fishing in the territorial sea and fishing in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Aquaculture is a growing industry and has become more commercial with a significant involvement of the private industry.

worth TShs 1.49 tn (approx. US\$700 mn) in 2014.

Agriculture and fisheries are the main sources of employment in the country, accounting for about half of the employed workforce and a quarter of GDP. Although there has been a slight decline in the percentage of people employed in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sector—from 76.5 per cent in 2006 to 66.9 per cent in 2014—in reality, operators in the small-scale fisheries have increased in number. The number of fishers in the small-scale capture fisheries increased from 78,672 in 1998 to 183,800 in 2014, with a large, but unknown, number also engaged in fish trading and processing. By 2014, it was estimated that about 4 mn people earn their living from fisheries-related activities. The number of fish farmers in aquaculture also doubled, from 9,500 in 1998 to 18,286 in 2014. A number of fishers are also employed in the industrial fisheries sector, such as the recently licenced shrimp trawlers.

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Although the fisheries sector is not among the major employers in the country, having only 0.7 per cent of the total work force in 2014, its significance is growing both socially and economically. In 2014, it was estimated that the fisheries sector had been growing at a rate of 5.5 per cent but its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) was still low, being only 2.4 per cent of the GDP. Inland water bodies contribute about 85 per cent of the total annual fish landings, while coastal marine fisheries contribute about 15 per cent. Between 1998 and 2014, fish production from the capture fisheries increased from 348,000 tonnes worth TShs 76.76 bn (approx. US\$3.6 mn) in 1998 to 365,974 tonnes

## Work security

Given the open-access environment, the capture fisheries—both the inland and coastal marine fisheries—have grown exponentially. Coastal marine fisheries are fully, if not over-, exploited, and the increasing number of vessels and fishers is compelling the government to put in place mechanisms of control that would not only sustain the fisheries resource and environments, but also support gainful employment, security of work and socioeconomic mobility. Employment opportunities exist within the underexploited fish stocks in both fresh and marine waters, and in the underexploited deep sea and

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EEZ fisheries resources. Despite its growing significance, the employment environment within small-scale fisheries is engulfed by a number of issues that arise from its traditional system of engagement, uneconomical technologies and the natural conditions impacting on water bodies in the context of climate changes.

The mode of employment in the small-scale fisheries of Tanzania grants fishers some job security and, equally, some insecurity. Firstly, the pattern of fishing is largely dependent on the fishing technique and type of fishing gear or technology used. Most fishers are self-employed, operating singly or in pairs using the hook-and-line or traditional fishing traps/nets; fishers include octopus catchers (mostly women) and collectors of shellfish. Other fishers are engaged as crew to a vessel and for a certain period. (These periods are not fixed, neither is the engagement of these fishers to the vessel). Such fishing uses mostly manually handled nets or longlines. Fishing crew on a particular vessel are normally engaged through an oral agreement with the 'nahodha' (pilot) who navigates the

vessel to the desired fishing grounds. The *nahodha* normally enters into a more secure, though oral, agreement based on trust with the owner of the vessel (*tajiri*), if he himself is not the owner. The *nahodha* is then entrusted in enlisting crew on a casual basis. Crews may sustain a fishing season, and may even move across fishing sites with the same *nahodha* for a longer period, setting camp (*dago*) where fishing grounds are more lucrative. Fishing trips usually last for half a day, although the length can extend, depending on seasons. Some fishing teams may spend up to three weeks away from home, especially when they establish *dago* in distant fishing places, or islands. Increasingly, fishers are camping within, or next to, established villages where they can get basic needs such as food, water and, sometimes, shelter.

This system has reduced the arduous conditions associated with setting camp in the wild. Fishers are normally engaged according to the traditional system of remuneration, the share system, where they are paid a share of the fish catches or

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Women sardine traders awaiting for fishing vessels to dock, Tanga, Tanzania. Tanzanian fishers employed by industrial fishing vessels are comparatively better organized and better-off since they fall under the formalized employment regulations

proceeds/income from fish catches. A common arrangement involves a 50:50 distribution between the *tajiri* and the fishing crew (plus the *nahodha*), which is made after the deduction of operational costs. The *nahodha* is then given a small share by the *tajiri* since he is not only

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entrusted with the fishing operations, but also the safety of the vessel. Due to this share system, fishers' incomes vary according to seasons, according to spring tides (*bamvua*), which are biweekly, and according to the conditions of the water, which determine fishing successes. Hence their income is irregular and they may sometimes go without an income during low fishing periods if they do not have alternative livelihood activities. In practice, however, the lack of formal engagements does not limit fishers in making claims concerning their employer or *nahodha*, since these are dealt with by traditional sanctions. But these claims may not be recognized by formal legal instruments if they become unmanageable. On the other hand, the lack of permanent engagement has allowed the Tanzanian small-scale fisheries sector to maintain flexible employment conditions. Thus, fishers remain highly mobile and they normally do not stick for long with one owner. This mobility makes it difficult to attach fishers to a particular place of domicile or residence, with implications on monitoring of their employment.

Vessel owners, in turn, are also wary of such mobile fishers, particularly because of occasional breaches of trust. "Sometimes the owner of a vessel and fishing nets may give fishing crew equipment on the agreement that they sell all catch to him or her on return, but some fishers

breach this agreement and sell the catch to whoever pays higher", says one owner. This practice is termed locally as *kupigapanga*. Such cheating distorts employment arrangements and often pushes the fishers out of work. Yet, as is the case with fishers, vessel owners cannot lay formal charges but choose instead to seek traditional arbitration systems, which may not be always reliable.

Remuneration from direct fishing is further limited by the schemes of middle-persons and other post-harvest operators in the fisheries value chain. Being at the lowest end of this chain, fishers often do not get a fair value for their labour, and they are the ones subjected to the harshest conditions in the sector. Women, who are mostly engaged in daily paid tasks such as offloading fish (*Kiswahili: wapakuaji* or *wabebaji*) also earn quite low prices, depending on the nature of catches. The government also cannot maintain indicative prices for finfish, except where it is export-related and subjected to international standards as it is for the Nile perch, shrimp and other shellfish. Inadequate storage capacities push the fishers to sell immediately, and they usually negotiate prices according to the market of the day.

### Useful platforms

The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have had considerable gain in mobilizing small-scale fishers to form their own organizations, which is seen in the several community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs that have been established. Some of these organizations claim to be representative of fishers across the country, while others are more location- or fishing-ground-based, such as the Fishers Union Organization (FUO); Umojawa Wavuvi Wadogowadogo Dar es Salaam (UWAWADA) and Chama cha Wavuviwadogo MinaziMikinda (CHAWAWAMI). One of the objectives of establishing fishers' CBOs and NGOs was to facilitate platforms on which fishers could make demands and improve their situations. Beach

management units (BMUs) are currently the single most broad-based community of fishers and fishworkers surrounding a fish landing site. In most cases, the landing site also represents a village community. BMUs are a government-established CBO whose mandates include monitoring the fisheries; management of landing sites, and, confronting illegal fishing; they have been quite effective in inland fisheries, especially around Lake Victoria. It is important to note, however, that the concerns these organizations mostly deal with are not usually related to employment conditions of fishers, but to other livelihood basics such as access to healthcare, HIV and AIDS, taxation, prices and market conditions.

Tanzanian fishers employed by industrial fishing vessels are comparatively better organized and better-off since they fall under the formalized employment regulations. Fishers in this sub-sector have formed a trade union, the Tanzania Fishermen and Maritime Workers Union (TAFIMU), formerly known by its Kiswahili acronym, WAMEUTA—Wafanyakazi wa Meliza Uvuvi Tanzania. This organization has been registered by the Registrar of Organizations Tanzania, and hence is a formalized platform for claim making and seeking for better labour rewards and recognition than is generally the case for small-scale fishers in Tanzania.

Although the Government of Tanzania has long emphasized the importance of decent work in the fisheries, it still recognizes that the fisheries are one of those sectors with significant issues regarding decent work. Incidences of abuses against women and children have been reported frequently but are not effectively documented or recorded. Both inland and marine fisheries have high incidences of child labour—in actual fishing, processing and vessel cleaning—which is also seen in the aquaculture sub-sector. Several efforts to discourage and prohibit such labour have been made; yet, weak enforcement of child labour and related legislation, particularly in rural Tanzania, has permitted the

practice to persist. Other challenges arise out of low economic situations of many households, including the traditional perception on the age where a child needs to support a household. Tanzania has ratified to the universalised standard age of a child, as a person of 18 years and below, but studies have shown that children, particularly after primary school (Standard 7) are regarded as grownups and should engage in work, even though they may be below 15 years of age. The Integrated Labour Force Survey of 2014 estimated that the agriculture and fishery sector employs about 89.3 per cent of the working children in Tanzania. Findings of a 2012 study indicated that the fisheries sector contains some of the worst forms of child labour in Tanzania, exposing children to health problems, including sexual abuse.

Fishers' safety during work is another important labour issue in the fisheries of Tanzania. Although most fishing is conducted within the intertidal area (ocean) and near shore in the lakes, increasingly, fishers are venturing farther as many of them have become motorised, and the use

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of global positioning system (GPS) to negotiate to fishing grounds is becoming more common. Although accurate data on fatalities is missing, fishers usually recount their struggles with rough seas, and frequent and unexpected storms.

#### **Safety at sea**

Yet, most of the vessels used are not sturdy enough to withstand storms or accidents at sea, which are often experienced when the southerly monsoons pick up. It is also not very common for these vessels to carry safety gear on fishing trips. Fisheries Regulation 12- (1) (a) (b) and (c) of 2009 spells out that

a licensed fishing vessel shall not proceed on a fishing voyage unless it has fulfilled certain obligations, including carrying sufficient quantity of food and number of utensils for holding water and food; having a serviceable horn or trumpet, and at least two life rings, one life jacket or

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any other approved life-saving equipment for each crew, and fire-extinguishing devices. Vessel owners, however, hardly ever subscribe to, or provide, insurance packages to cater for fishing-related accidents.

The Fisheries Department and the Surface and Marine Transport Registration Agency (SUMATRA) are both entitled to monitor the safety of fishers as they go for work by enforcing safety-at-sea procedures. The Fisheries Department/local government authorities claim that they issue a vessel licence only after SUMATRA certifies/approves the safety conditions of the fishing vessels. But inspection to ensure compliance of safety regulations is not yet a regular practice. Regular monitoring may, however, be challenging, considering that fishing trips are usually arbitrarily decided, depending on seasons and conditions of the sea/waters. Occasional exercises by SUMATRA to promote safety procedures for water travel are conducted for small-scale fishers but are still inadequate. For example, fishers at the Sahare landing site (Tanga Municipality) recalled one of SUMATRA's attempts to distribute life jackets to fishers but lack of proper co-ordination with local fishing groups resulted in many of the jackets being taken by non-fishers.

Social-security institutions in Tanzania are gradually embracing more liberal insurance schemes in addition to the conventional employer-employee systems, where

each is obliged to make periodic contributions to insurance schemes. Such changes could be taken as innovations in insurance marketing strategies, responding to the needs of the times, but they allow individual commitments to insurance schemes. A number of institutions have, therefore, established insurance schemes that target persons operating in the informal sector such as small-scale fishers, petty business people and small-scale miners.

Other insurance systems that touch on informal operators include the Community Health Fund (CHF), which, through concerted mobilization, is becoming increasingly adopted by grass-roots communities, including fishing communities. Another mechanism is promoting a savings culture through the VICOBA (Village Community Banks) scheme, which also allows fishers and fishing communities to set aside periodic savings and gradually realize benefits. A couple of key challenges, however, still prevail: one, the inadequate mobilization and awareness raising on the benefits of such schemes; and two, the uncertainty or irregularity of incomes, which sometimes compromises people's commitments to such schemes.

The small-scale fisheries sector, in particular, has benefitted from the recently established 'Wote Fund', run by the Tanzania Parastatal Pension Fund (PPF), which targets all informal sector operators, including fishers. The WAVUVI Scheme, established by the Tanzania National Social Security Fund (NSSF), is, to date, one of the most innovative social-security schemes directly targeting fishers. This scheme is one among several other schemes that are 'occupation-based' and target the informal sector. Other schemes established by NSSF with similar conditions include the Wakulima (Farmers) Scheme and the Madini (Miners) Scheme.

#### **Attractive conditions**

Conditions for subscribing to the Wavuvi scheme are, thus, quite attractive to small-scale fishers, but would be accessible only if they are

able to maintain gainful employment and concerted advocacy.

The 'informality' in work and employment conditions within small-scale fisheries in Tanzania has permitted operators in the sector to seek arbitration through multiple forums. One is the traditional dispute-resolution systems in cases between fishers themselves, such as when fishers need resolution for pay-related issues.

The other is through appealing to government authorities in the case of disgruntlement with regulations, inadequate state support to enhance fishing capacity or when they are violated by other users who operate in the fishing sector. Many fishers complain about the hassle of annual fishing licences, claiming that it is not only too high, but also cumbersome in the nature of its enforcement.

There is an evident discord between fishers' accountability and enforcement mechanisms in licensing of small-scale fishers in Tanzania which creates significant conflicts. Other common incidences of conflict are between small-scale and industrial fishers. In both the lake fisheries and marine fisheries, industrial trawlers are often caught in the wrong because they destroy the fishing nets/traps of small-scale fishers. At this level, the immediate local government office serves as the point of appeal through which frequent arbitration is performed. This has demanded concerted follow-up that is costly in terms of time and financial expenses to small-scale fishers.

There are both formal and informal rules that inform work-related issues in the small-scale fisheries of Tanzania. National Fisheries Policies, Acts and Regulations and related instruments provide the major formal framework informing employment and labour issues for small-scale fisheries, and are applicable for both the inland and coastal fisheries of Tanzania, and they basically address issues regarding sustainable fisheries development and management; enforcement and compliance, technologies and innovation. Key instruments guiding this sector include: (i) Fisheries Act No. 22 of



Fishing crew leaving for the job, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The WAVUVI Scheme is one of the most innovative social-security schemes directly targeting fishers

2003 that repealed the Fisheries Act No 6 of 1970; (ii) Principal Fisheries Regulations (2009) (iii) Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Act of 1989; and, (iv) Marine Parks and Reserves Act (Act No. 29 of 1994). These fisheries legislations provide for compulsory fishing licences of two types: (a) Fishers (Individual) Licence, which costs TShs20,000 per annum, and serves as an identity document for a fisher, and (b) the Small-scale Fishing Vessel Licence (Tshs20,000). The vessel licence serves as a property ownership document and can be used to access credit. Fish products are also taxed 5 per cent of the fish sales landed. Informal rules and norms operate in conjunction with these formal rules and are equally binding to fishers and fishworkers, as mentioned above, and are evident in the daily work arrangements and dispute resolution.

#### **Lack of compliance**

Fisheries legislations also emphasize responsible fishing, which is monitored through enforcement mechanisms, compliance and education. Sometimes, the lack of compliance through the use of unsustainable technologies has resulted in serious disputes or conflicts with authorities. One of the most pervasive conflict is related to the use of dynamite in killing fish, and the use of illegal fishing methods which have not only been destructive

to the natural environment, but also destructive to the fishers' own livelihoods. Willing compliance with sustainable fishing practices, therefore, affects the employment environment in the fisheries. There is a small level of traditional fisheries management in pockets of the country, one of the most significant being the community-based octopus closures in locations of Pemba island. This indicates that participatory development of regulations may be more appropriate to secure both fishers' labour rights and the health of the fishing environment. Labour concerns for the small-scale fisheries sector, therefore, cannot avoid questions about enforcement and compliance, and must address both rights and responsibilities of the fishers themselves for gainful employment in the sector.

The sociocultural, economic and policy contexts in Tanzania have created certain conditions of work in the Tanzania fisheries that have made fishers differentially vulnerable to environmental, social and work-related problems, compared to other sectors. The context also shows that there are different levels of rules that inform the fisheries, each of which influences employment conditions and benefits of fishers and fishworkers to enable them to engage in gainful employment. Informal employment engagements and inadequate mobilization have made many of the fishers encounter low rates of remuneration, low job security and inadequate access to social-security and social-protection systems. Specifically, the following key issues summarize the conditions of labour in the small-scale fisheries of Tanzania:

- Employment conditions are based on oral, informal agreements which, although are binding according to traditional sanctions, do not permit formal recognition by current legislation unless they are sanctioned by the government. Such situations allow for avoidance of the law and fishers' rights.
- Small-scale fishing is a precarious occupation, sometimes subjecting fishers to natural disasters during work. Opportunities to subscribe to insurance schemes exist but they are still too minimal and not widely advocated.
- Employment agreements on traditional systems do not entail binding insurance benefits, including accident or off-season benefits; and there is still inadequate mobilization of social-security schemes and benefits among fishers and fishing communities to cater for the needs of the occupation.
- There are limitations in small-scale fishers' organizations to mobilize for favourable employment conditions.
- The working environment remains precarious for fishers because of poor technologies, especially for local vessels to maintain sea/water-worthy safety standards.
- Informality has sometimes limited effective monitoring of small-scale operators, despite sound regulations. This has had implications on fishers' abilities to engage in gainful employment from the fisheries.

#### For more

[http://www.cuts-citee.org/tdp/pdf/Case\\_Study-Fisheries\\_Sub\\_Sector\\_in\\_Tanzania.pdf](http://www.cuts-citee.org/tdp/pdf/Case_Study-Fisheries_Sub_Sector_in_Tanzania.pdf)

#### **The Linkages between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction: The Case Study of the Fisheries Subsector in Tanzania**

[http://www.saspen.org/conferences/informal2013/Paper\\_Ackson-Masabo\\_FES-SASPEN-16SEP2013-INT-CONF-SP4IE.pdf](http://www.saspen.org/conferences/informal2013/Paper_Ackson-Masabo_FES-SASPEN-16SEP2013-INT-CONF-SP4IE.pdf)

#### **Social Protection for the Informal Sector in Tanzania**

<http://www.nbs.go.tz/nbstz/index.php/english/statistics-by-subject/labour-statistics/614-the-2014-integrated-labour-force-survey-ilfs>

#### **Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS)**

<https://sites.google.com/site/ssfguidelines/tanzania>

#### **Towards the Implementation of Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) Guidelines in Tanzania**