

Introduction to LVFRP Technical Document 10

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In March 2000, the LVFRP hosted a workshop on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The main rationale behind this initiative lay in the quality of the data that had been collected during the LVFRP's Co-management Survey. While of a very high quality, the data was wholly quantitative, leaving little room to explain the dynamism inherent in the fishing systems of the lake and the survival strategies of the members of its communities. As a result, the project decided to invest in a far more qualitative approach, which would form the methodology to its '3-beaches Survey'.

The findings of the PRA workshop's activities at Kiumba Beach on Rusinga Island in Kenya were published as the project's eighth technical document. This ninth technical document contains the findings of five subsequent PRAs carried out by the socio-economists from the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute in Kisumu, the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute in Mwanza, and the Fisheries Resources Research Institute in Jinja. PRAs were carried out at Ihale and Mwasonge Beaches in Tanzania, Lwalalo and Nkombe Beaches in Uganda, and Obenge Beach in Kenya (Figure 1).

Initially, the 3-beaches Survey aimed to examine co-managerial potentials at three landing sites around Lake Victoria. When Lwalalo was discovered to be a private landing site, it was dropped as a candidate beach for the survey, and attention turned to a second site, Nkombe. This does not detract from Lwalalo's value as a survey site, or from the interest of the SEDAWOG team's findings at the landing. In Tanzania, the newly formed Beach Management Units presented SEDAWOG with a very interesting opportunity. Here, beach committees have been formed by the Tanzanian Fisheries Department, which are charged with the implementation of the State's fisheries regulations. Much co-management literature argues that if communities of resource exploiters are not part of the rule-making process, it is unlikely that the rules will be obeyed. The administrative changes occurring to Tanzania's Lake Victoria fishery presented the research team with a unique opportunity to examine the veracity of this argument. Ihale was the first of the PRAs to be carried out in the region. It was already known that the landing was on very good terms with the fisheries administration, and there was much to suggest that the community, welcoming though it was, had tried to present the research team with a picture of managerial bliss. It seemed, therefore, prudent to select a contrasting site against which to examine findings from Ihale, and ponder why the application of BMUs in one place might yield very different results to BMUs implemented at other places. Mwasonge is the second of the Tanzanian sites, and is very different from Ihale. The Fisheries Department has already forced the first BMU to disband, and when the research team arrived at Mwasonge, the new BMU had just taken office. Mwasonge, by its own admission, was a beach well known for lawlessness. The 3-beaches Survey, therefore, has become the 4-beaches Survey.

For the first time in the history of socio-economic work on Lake Victoria, studies were carried out by the whole of SEDAWOG, such that when PRAs occurred in Tanzania, Kenyan and Ugandan colleagues joined their Tanzanian teammates, and so on around the lake. Only at Nkombe and Mwasonge were surveys carried out by national researchers alone.

The overall objective of these surveys is to generate baseline data on the survey sites in preparation for the 4-beaches Survey. The latter comprises a component of the Co-management Survey, the objectives of which are as follows:

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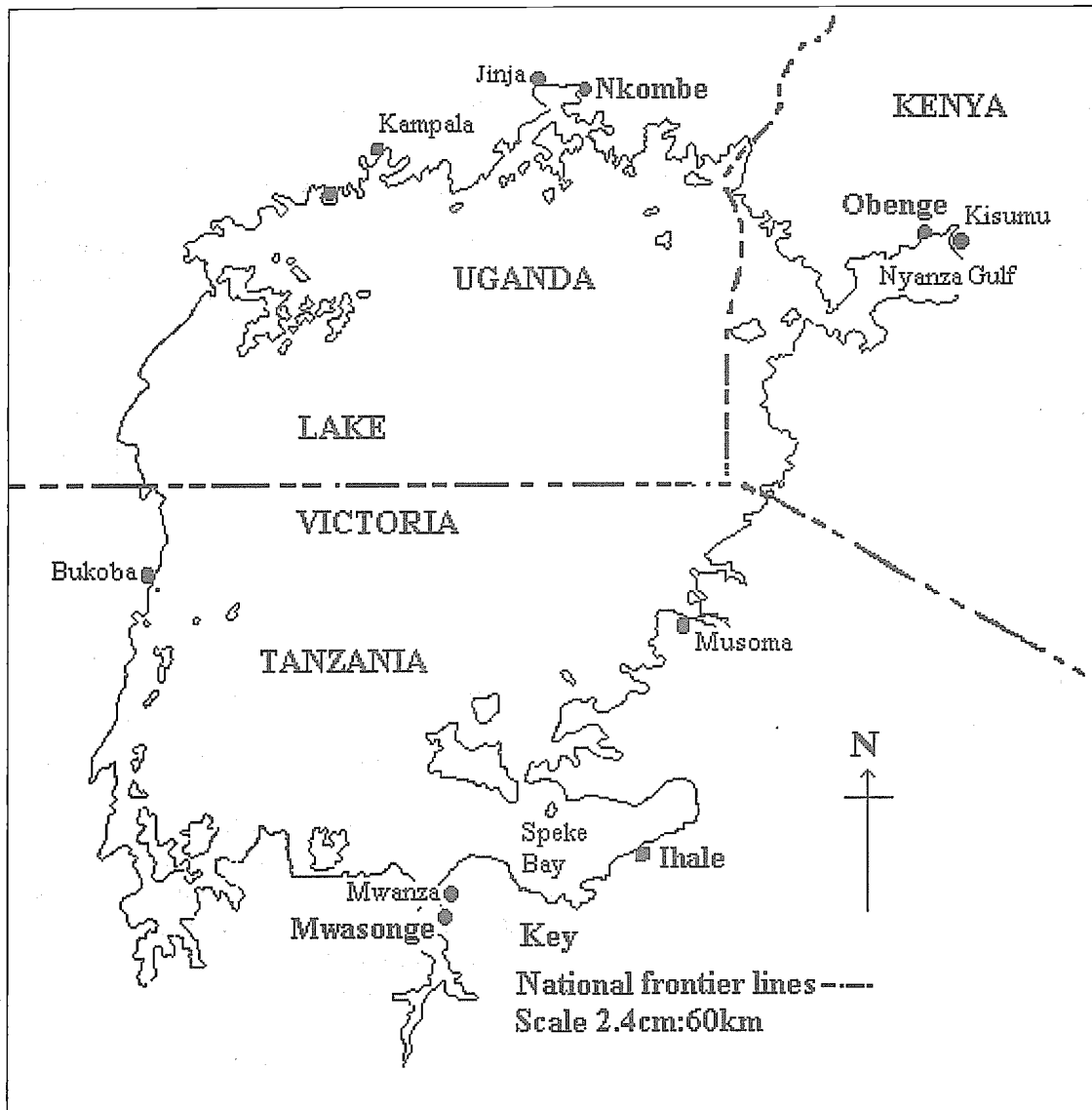


Figure 1: location of landing sites featured in this study

- (a) To identify the difficulties and impracticalities inherent in implementing state-based regulations via a 'top-down' management strategy.
- (b) To assess the prevalence of community-based institutions that either seek to regulate the fishery or have the potential to be used to regulate it.
- (c) To identify ways in which community-based regulatory and monitoring systems may be established, and how these will fare over time.
- (d) To identify roles for national Fisheries Departments, industrial fish processors and other 'stake holders'.
- (e) To develop well-founded policy suggestions for the establishment of a co-management framework to manage the fisheries of Lake Victoria.

More specifically, the objectives of the 4-beaches Survey are as follows:

- (a) To identify community institutions which either seeks to directly regulate access to, or ownership of, fisheries resources; or those institutions that could be used for these purposes.

- (b) To understand whether or not community-based institutions are able to support externally introduced regulations, such as state-sourced suggestions.
- (c) To understand the kinds of benefits that communities require in order to adopt and/or develop regulatory institutions. Perceptions of these benefits and the regulations that they support will need to be understood if community-based regulations are to form a component in a co-management framework for Lake Victoria's fisheries.
- (d) To understand what factors contribute to the survival of community-based institutions.
- (e) To identify how extension services can be delivered to communities, the form these should take and the types of services that such communities may require.

On completion, the outputs of the 4-beaches survey are expected to be as follows:

- (a) The identification of community institutions which influence access/ownership of fisheries resources.
- (b) The identification of institutions which could be used for these purposes.
- (c) An understanding of whether or not community-based institutions are able to support externally introduced regulations.
- (d) An understanding the kinds of benefits that communities require in order to adopt and/or develop regulatory institutions.
- (e) An understanding of the factors that contribute to the survival of community-based institutions over time.
- (f) Identification of how extension services can be delivered to the communities that depend upon fishing.

The studies report on in this volume demonstrate the complexity of the landing sites of the Lake Victoria in a way that quantitative survey methods could not possibly have hoped to have shown. Insofar as the PRA surveys provide information of relevance to fisheries management, the following can be said:

- (a) The kinds of regulations that exist at the landing sites may not appear to be fisheries-specific to outside observers, but to the fishing communities involved, they are. For example, several of the communities had regulations about where people could bathe in the lake, or whether or not animals could drink from the landing site. These regulations are symptomatic of communities viewing the fishery as part of a wider resource base that has multiple uses.
- (b) These PRAs delineate the relationships that exist between these communities and the state, showing how in Tanzania that the line between the community and the state is blurred; in Kenya that the line is distinct, but that the fingers of the state penetrate community structures to a profound degree; and in Uganda, showing, at Nkombe, that the state hovers at the periphery of community life, monitoring it without any real intervention, while at Lwalalo, operating almost by proxy with the Fourways Group of Companies assuming many of its regulatory functions.
- (c) These communities are heterogeneous. In much literature on common property resource use (cf. Ostrom, 1990; Swallow, 1997), heterogeneity is viewed as being bad for the formation of community groups. This, however, does not appear to be the case (as argued by Baland and Platteau, 1996), and at many of the landing sites studied, organisations have evolved along lines that can be best described as 'club' formation (see Swallow, 1997: 19). This finding has important theoretical and practical connotations.
- (d) An additional and crucial component of these findings are that the rules that the four communities have are flexible. Partly as a result of the heterogeneity of these communities, the regulations that they have are contextually-dependent, and the way in which they work and what their outcomes are will depend on who is involved, the situation to which they are brought to bear, and the qualitative 'gravity' of the event that requires resolution.
- (e) The rules that these communities have do necessarily equate with external conservation objectives. In many cases, the rules that were discovered on these landings sites had more to do with conflict

resolution than the preservation of the fishery. Indeed, where the rules did seem to have some bearing on the fishery – through, for example, a community ban on poisoning – this appears to be incidental. It may well be that the rules are enacted to prevent the use of fishing gear or techniques that the community knows will cause disputes. This emphasis on rules as a means to conflict resolution, and a negotiable reference point that can cater for a diversity of conflict situations, has been echoed elsewhere in Africa (Cleaver, 2000).

What these results mean is that if the riparian countries of Lake Victoria are to consider co-management as a managerial option for the future, its success will in large measure depend on ensuring that they are formulated in ways similar to how fishing communities have formulated them, with an emphasis on negotiability, flexibility and contextual dependence. In other words, if communities are to be considered viable components in the fisheries management process in the future, fishing regulations will have to be couched in such a way that they make sense to the communities involved, and are applicable to community contexts. The emphasis on the negotiability of these rules is tantalising prospect, for it may be that an understanding of how rules are negotiated within these communities may provide governments with a route down which regulations may be channelled.

Whether or not the latter statements will be proved remains to be seen, although results from the 4-beaches Survey provide interesting substance to the discussion.

References

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