

Binga's VaTonga communities involvement in Zambezi river fishery resource harvesting and management

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Abstract

Fishing dependent rural communities in developing countries are poor despite staying close to resources which can improve their lives. This motivated this study to assess the participation of Binga District communities in exploitation and management of fishery resources. A descriptive research design supported by both qualitative and quantitative research methods was employed. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observations were used to collect data, and Microsoft excel 2016 was used for data analysis. Findings indicate that the VaTonga Communities of Binga (Basilwizi) District are not exercising their full fishing rights as expected because of a combination of lack of knowledge, failure of local authorities to represent local people in development policy designing, poverty and lack of transparency on expected management and exploitation rights of fishery resources. It was confirmed that all people wish to participate in fishing but strict access rights and poverty are major constraints. Main challenges faced by fishers include disruption of activities by crocodiles and hippos, poaching by foreign people and fish markets. Results showed that there is potential of livelihood improvement for people if their access rights are revised and if they are fully capacitated to exploit and protect their resources through community based natural resource management program. Unlike other studies in the same research domain, a framework for sustainable exploitation of fishery resources was developed as way forward. The framework recommends revision of access rights for local people and donor support to capacitate them with fishing resources amongst other aspects that need attention to improve socio-economic development and ecological integrity in the national thrust of leaving no one and no place behind towards achievement of global sustainable development goals. These findings will be an eye opener to policy makers with regards to the consequences of neglecting local people of ignoring them in decision making.

Keywords: Fishery resources, Fishery resource exploitation, Sustainable development, Rural communities, Access rights