

ALTERNATIVES NEEDED FOR ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As fish stocks continue to decline all around the world, marine conservation needs to step up more than ever. Marine conservation often employs alternative livelihood projects to move ocean-dependent communities away from harmful marine activities into other ventures. However, these ventures are poorly implemented, out of context with their communities, unprofitable for the participants, and unsustainable. It's time to step away from this one-size-fit-all approach and instead fit to the needs of the communities.

What are alternative livelihood projects?

Alternative livelihood projects are included as part of different kinds of marine conservation project, such as setting up a Marine Protected Areas. They are funded by various international groups, sometimes collaborating with local governments, to get local fishers to stop harmful marine activities. Some examples of these alternative livelihoods include terrestrial agriculture, mariculture, and tourism activities like crafts for souvenirs, beekeeping and chicken rearing. The activities require little to no training nor much commitment at all from the locals that end up participating in them. These projects are often short-lived due to the discontinuation of funding by the organizing conservation groups and their sponsors. While the alternative livelihood projects are meant to provide a mean of living other than fishing, they fail to deliver. Thus when the conservation project group pulls out of the area, the locals return to their fishing and other marine activities to make a living.

FEWER FISH FOR THE FUTURE

- ✚ Catch all over the world has been on the decline.
- ✚ More than 50% of fish stocks are exploited fully, over exploited, or depleted.
- ✚ Fishers frequently report catching fewer fish than they did in the past.
- ✚ Stocks are depleting due to a variety of reasons: harmful fishing gear and practices, overfishing, habitat loss, climate change, etc.
- ✚ Conservation efforts must be coupled with sustainable practices in order to make a difference.

Case Study

Alternative livelihood projects were launched in several Tanzanian villages in the Mnazi Bay–Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park. Different villages were assigned different activities called alternative income generating projects (AIGs), with little consultation with the fishers, their families, and the communities. Responses from interviewed households showed that many people felt they were not given enough information about the AIGs in the first place (fig. 1).

Participants felt that the AIGs were only for the sake of MPA compliance, rather than to provide genuine alternate sources of income. Overall, participants felt there was little gain from the AIGs, and many saw them only as opportunities to access to funding and new equipment that they could not previously afford. A lack of skills, training, commitment and unrealistic expectations for the AIGs resulted in many participants abandoning the new venture for their previous activities.

WHAT NEXT?

Marine Conservation is not just an ecological issue, but a social and economic one as well. Many people all over the world, especially in coastal communities rely on the ocean's resources to live. In order to protect these resources, reduce the pressures, and move to sustainable practices, it is not enough to simply give fishers different jobs and hope for results. If the alternative livelihood projects cannot actually generate a proper income, fisher will not abandon marine activities in favor of an unprofitable, unsustainable project. Meaningful consultation needs to be conducted in order to develop plans for moving away from harmful marine activities. Local communities must be involved such that they are invested and compliant with the changes imposed as a result of MPAs, changes in gear requirements, change in fishery management, and other such conservation efforts. If the livelihood projects is are not sustainable, there will be little effect on Marine Conservation.

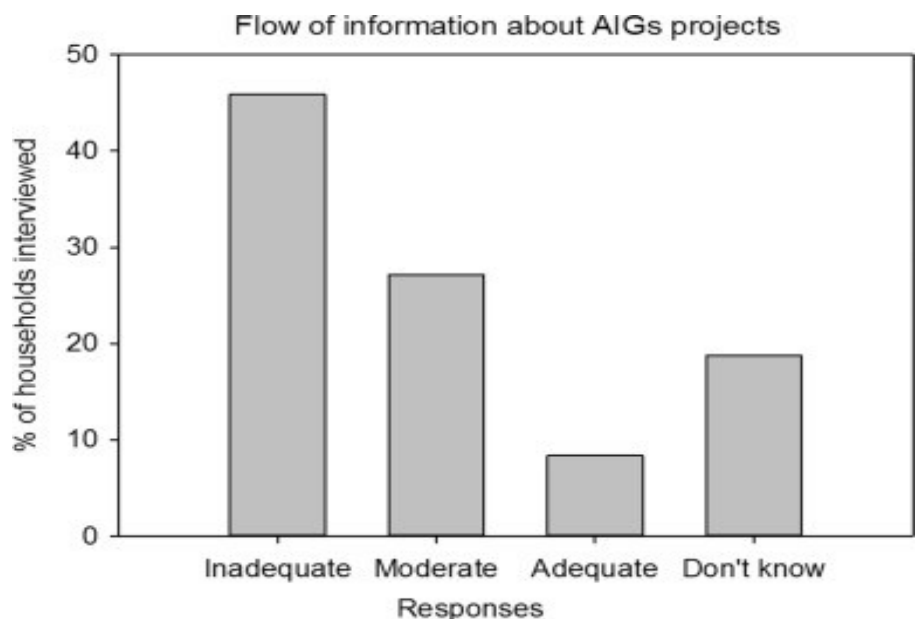


Figure 1: Percentage of households interviewed in the study and their response to the amount of information they received on the alternative income generating (AIG) projects being implemented (Katikiro, 2

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