



Conflict Factsheet

Conservation and conflict: The Mafia Island Marine Park

Type of conflict Main	Intensity 1
Conflict Locality Eastern Africa	Time 1995 –ongoing
Countries Tanzania	Resources Fish, Biodiversity, Ecosystem Stability



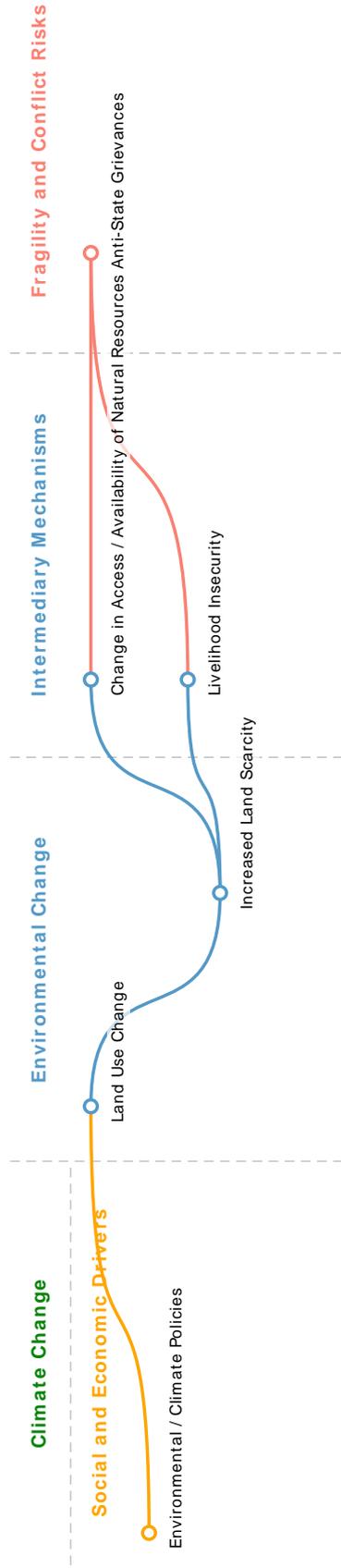
Unintended effects of climate policies

Conflict Summary

Since the establishment of the Mafia Island Marine Park in eastern Tanzania for conservation purposes, local access to fisheries and other maritime resources has been restricted. As many of the park’s residents are highly dependent on these resources, a conflict has developed between Mafia Island’s residents and the park’s authorities. Some fishers refuse to accept the restrictions, sometimes leading to arrests and violent clashes.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Fish, Biodiversity, Ecosystem Stability

Dysfunctional Resource Management
Overreliance on Specific Supplies

Lack of Alternative Livelihoods



Conflict History

In 1995 the government of Tanzania established the Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) southeast of Zanzibar Island in an attempt to protect biodiversity off its shores. However, the park's strict regulations on fishing and the use of other coastal resources have been a thorn in the side of local communities that depend heavily on corals, fish and mangroves to earn a living. Violent incidents between fishermen who are not respecting the park's regulations and enforcement officers have occasionally occurred.

Establishment of the MIMP

The region around Mafia Island, located 20 kilometres east of mainland Tanzania, is internationally recognised for its biodiversity, as it is one of the habitats supporting the highest marine biodiversity in eastern Africa and the western Indian Ocean ([Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012](#); [URT, 2011](#)). In the 1980s global and local demand for the island's resources rose, and this led to an increase in fishing intensity. Both residents and outsiders intensified their use of destructive methods like dynamite fishing. Furthermore, extreme weather events also endangered the coral reefs. For example, in 1998 extreme sea temperatures due to the El Niño phenomenon destroyed important parts of the reefs' live corals ([Johnson et al., 2012](#)).

In 1995 the Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) was established with the aim of conserving biodiversity and ecosystem processes, and promoting sustainable resource use. Another goal was to facilitate eco-tourism, as developing the tourist industry promised to bring considerable returns ([Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012](#)). Apart from the Tanzanian government, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) played an important role in the implementation process, for example by funding the staff's salary ([Johnson et al., 2012](#)). Spanning 288 km² and with 18,000 to 23,000 people living within its boundaries, the MIMP is the largest and most populated marine park in Africa ([Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012](#); [URT, 2011](#)).

Impact on local livelihoods

Strategies to protect the park's biodiversity include restrictions on access to fishing grounds, the prohibition of several types of fishing gear and a ban on coral mining ([Moshy et al., 2015](#)). Approximately 50% of the park's inhabitants rely heavily on the exploitation of marine resources; for some villages, fisheries resources account for 70 to 80% of their income. Besides fishing, coral mining for commercial lime production and the cutting of mangroves is a source of income for many ([URT, 2011](#)). Thus, the decline in fishing possibilities and the restrictions on other resource-related activities has reduced local capacities to meet basic needs, leading to higher poverty rates and, as some authors stress, even undernutrition among children ([Moshy et al., 2013](#)).

As a consequence, some fishers refuse to respect the regulations and follow their traditional fishing patterns. A good example is the village of Jibondo, where fishers voted to reject the MIMP and its regulations in 2004, as they claimed the park had created a crisis in their lives. In particular the confiscation of their fishing gear by park authorities had led to a vicious cycle, as people needed to fish even more to pay off the loans for the new equipment ([Moshy et al., 2015](#)).



Moreover, the establishment of core zones, where fishing is completely forbidden, and the ban of coral mining have been perceived as overly restrictive and socially problematic, resulting in anger against those responsible for the park's management (McClanahan et al., 2008; Mwaipopo, 2008).

Disappointment over compensation measures

Further frustrations stem from the fact that residents of the MIMP were promised compensation via an alternative livelihood programme, including the promotion of beekeeping, seaweed farming, handicrafts and other activities. Yet, the benefits of this programme have fallen short of expectations and it has not been possible to successfully substitute fishing-related activities (Mwaipopo, 2008).

Since the park's foundation, the tourist industry has developed significantly, attracting mostly foreign investors and tourists. A percentage of the park's proceeds is invested in local development projects, but residents perceive the distribution processes to be non-transparent. Beforehand, residents were promised economic advantages from tourism. Due to the observation that benefits flow mostly to the state and foreign enterprises, dissatisfaction with the park's authorities and the government is rising. Given their missing revenues, they perceive the tourism industry as competition for access to resources rather than a potential source of income (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Mwaipopo, 2008).

Exclusionary management practices

Participation of local communities in the management of the MIMP has remained limited, despite corresponding provisions in the planning process of the MIMP (URT, 2011). Over the years, dialogue between local residents and MIMP officials has decreased, while violent approaches to enforce park regulations have been applied more regularly. This has reinforced the anger of local communities against the park's management (Moshy et al., 2015).

Resolution Efforts

The necessity both of supporting those negatively affected by the park through alternative revenues and of including local communities in decision making processes was recognized from the very beginning of the MIMPs creation. Yet, corresponding mechanisms to ensure community participation have either not been assessed or fallen short of expectations so far.

Participatory measures

Before and during the planning phase of the MIMP it was considered important to secure the consent of residents. Therefore, primary designs were participatory and villagers were promised opportunities to meaningfully participate in the management of the park in advance. A joint Steering Committee was founded in 1991, including representatives of the government, fishermen and civil society, to approve the establishment of the MIMP after previous consultations. Precisely because possibilities for participation were given during the planning process, the absence of comparable formats regarding management issues contributed to the feeling of being increasingly excluded from decision making (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Johnson et al., 2012).



In cooperation with the Tanzanian government, WWF created Beach Management Units, through which fisher's representatives could participate in decisions regarding management plans and government fisheries regulations (Johnson et al., 2012). The importance of local community involvement is recognized by the MIMP management and is reflected in the official General Management Plan 2011, but the actual participation of local communities has not been systematically assessed so far (URT, 2011).

Promotion of alternative livelihoods

Various programmes to support alternative livelihoods have been developed by the park's management and the WWF. Diversification of livelihoods is not only important to raise the park's acceptance, but also to reduce pressures on wild fish stocks. Activities such as beekeeping, seaweed farming and handicrafts have been promoted, but proceeds from these activities have remained low (Mwaipopo, 2008). Furthermore, the foundation of community banks was encouraged to support people starting a business – a plan that turned out to be difficult due to the isolated geographical location (Johnson et al., 2012; Mwaipopo, 2008). Also, MIMP's management aims to develop under-utilised resources by providing opportunities for mariculture, agriculture, silviculture or agro-forestry. Residents of the park are still guaranteed priority access to its resources, and special permits have been issued to those living in the MIMP area (URT, 2011).

Beyond these measures, there is a wide range of options for transforming eco-tourism from a source of perceived competition for marine use into a source of income. Besides creating direct benefits at the community level by giving residents a share of the entry fees, the management strategy aims to increase the involvement of individuals. Staff are usually recruited from the local population and food preparation for tourists is a new potential field of activity (Johnson et al., 2012).

Health and awareness campaigns

In a joint effort with the national NGO SeaSense, WWF conducted education campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of environmental protection (Johnson et al., 2012). These target younger people, who, on average, are more opposed to the park's regulations than their elders (McClanahn et al., 2008).

More generally, improvements to education and healthcare services have been a high priority in the first years of the park and welcomed by many residents, but there has since been a shift towards activities related to the aforementioned (and contentious) alternative livelihood programmes. Given the aim of easing tensions between residents and park authorities, it may therefore be advisable to revise priorities (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012).

Outlook

While resistance to restrictions on fisheries is high among local fishermen, the majority of residents recognize the necessity of gear and minimum size restrictions (McClanahn et al., 2008). To ease tensions, it may therefore be worthwhile concentrating on these measures. Moreover, higher levels of transparency and accountability, both regarding the management of the park and the re-distribution of funds, are indispensable to restore trust in the park's authorities.



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity



Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Municipal



Resolution Success

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

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Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been partially addressed.





Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Transparency and accountability, both regarding the management of the park and the re-distribution of funds, are indispensable to restore trust in the park's authorities.</p>	0
<p>Social inclusion & empowerment</p> <p>Local communities were given possibilities for participation during the planning process of the park, specifically through the establishment of a joint Steering Committee. Beach Management Units were also created to allow community representatives to participate in decisions regarding management plans.</p>	2
<p>Promoting alternative livelihoods</p> <p>Alternative livelihoods have been promoted through various programmes by the park's management and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Activities surrounding ecotourism are also being developed as a potential source of income for local communities.</p>	2
<p>Promoting social change</p> <p>The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) together with the national NGO SeaSense have conducted education campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of environmental protection.</p>	2

Resources and Materials

References with URL

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- [Mwaipopo, R. \(2008\). The social dimensions of Marine Protected Areas: A case study of the Mafia Island Marine Park in Tanzania. Chennai: ICSF.](#)
- [URT \(2011\). Mafia Island Marine Park. General Management Plan. Dar es Salaam: Board of Trustees, Marine Parks and Reserves Unit.](#)



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Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/mafia-island-marine-park>