



***Coping strategies of Kenya's
coastal artisanal fishing house-
holds against poverty:***

***Do these strategies produce any
sustained benefit?***

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Contents

Page

v	List of figures
v	List of Appendices
vi	Abstract
1	Acronyms
2	Chapter 1: Preamble
4	1.1 Issue of concern
4	1.2 Research purpose
5	1.3 Assumptions
6	Chapter 2: Research procedure
8	2.1 Epistemological position
9	2.2 Scope and Limitations
10	2.3 Epistemological reflections of poverty
12	Chapter 3: A review of past poverty research on coastal Communities
12	3.1 Residual and Relational approaches to poverty
22	3.2 Theoretical foundation
23	3.3 Key concepts
25	Chapter 4: Outcomes of field research
25	4.1 Meaning of poverty
27	4.2 Agency (Coping strategies) employed to address Poverty
30	4.3 Transformative development and collective agency
32	Chapter 5: Synthesis of outcomes
36	Conclusion
38	Acknowledgement
39	References
46	Appendices

List of Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual Framework
Figure 2	Interview with Abdallah Amri
Figure 3	Interview with Abdalla Athmani
Figure 4	Interview with Jaffer Kimonge
Figure 5	Focus group with fishermen
Figure 6	Focus group with mother and fishermen spouses
Figure 7	Focus group with female fish traders
Figure 8	Poor state of fisherman's house
Figure 9	Dilapidated fisherman's house
Figure 10	Worn out fishing net
Figure 11	Worn out fisherman's footwear
Figure 12	Artisanal fishermen with the tools of their trade on the way to work
Figure 13	Kenyatta Beach fish banda
Figure 14	SSHFG fishing boat
Figure 15	Yusuf-SSHFG Chief fisherman
Figure 16	Boat engine
Figure 17	SSHFG Fish banda is a storage area for fishing gear

List of Appendices

Appendix I	- Initial descriptive codes	46
Appendix II	- Map of study area	49
Appendix III	- Participants in the study	50
Appendix IV	- Dilapidated fishermen's houses	51
Appendix V	- Kenyatta Beach landing site	52

Abstract

Thousands of Kenya's coastal artisanal fishermen suffer from severe poverty. Their poverty is visible in the dismal social and economic conditions in which artisanal fishing households exist, as well as in the inadequate fishing gear they use. This study examined how artisanal fishing households in Mkomani, perceived the poverty they experienced, how they coped with it, and whether their agency in responding to this poverty produced any transformational change in their lives. Two qualitative research instruments, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews, were used for data collection. The majority of respondents identified the lack of sufficient income (and the numerous domestic deprivations this caused), as well as the failure to receive any meaningful assistance from government as the primary manifestations of their poverty. The dependence on social networks and casual jobs were indicated as major coping strategies used in addressing poverty. While the participants' individual agency used to tackle poverty was greatly curtailed by this very same poverty, one group of local fishermen had through their collective effort established a fishermen's group which had produced significant transformative development in their livelihood.

Relevance to Development Studies

Poverty, as is repeatedly mentioned, is a multi-dimensional concept in terms of its causes and inter-related effects. Poverty has serious implications for any development efforts, anywhere. Development studies focus on aspects of poverty including its measurement, the resulting social exclusion it causes, as well as on social policies that can address it. My rationale for undertaking this project was that for any poverty-related strategies (or policies) to be relevant and effective, they have to be founded on the prevailing conditions (social, economic, environmental, etc) of the population they are intended to serve. With respect to this study on the fishermen in Mkomani, it is my hope that the results of my study will contribute even in the smallest way possible to the baseline data on which I believe any development-oriented strategies should be based.

Keywords

Poverty, Artisanal fishing households, Agency, Transformative development

List of Acronyms

CR	Critical Realism/Realist
DWFN	Distant Water Fishing Nations
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
KMFRI	Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute
Ksh	Kenya Shillings
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Plan
PFO	Principal Fisheries Officer
PIK	Poverty in Kenya
SDF	State Department of Fisheries
SSHFG	Subira Self-Help Fishermen's Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Chapter 1: Preamble

The marine fisheries products in Kenya provide vital social and economic benefits to the inhabitants in the coastal region in addition to the significant foreign exchange revenues derived from their export. The marine fisheries sector provides employment to thousands of small-scale fishermen, and thousands more people involved in a variety of fishing-related activities. These include fish traders, processors, transporters, net-makers and boat-builders. Artisanal fishing is the predominant livelihood for thousands of Kenya's coastal population. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) describes artisanal fisheries as:

"Traditional fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amount of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels (if any), making short fishing trips, close to shore, mainly for local consumption. Artisanal fisheries can be subsistence or commercial fisheries, providing for local consumption or export. They are sometimes referred to as small-scale fisheries" (FAO, 2014).

Most of the marine fishing in Kenya is small-scale and artisanal, operating in the coastal near-shore. The artisanal fishery is confined to a small strip of 2.5 to 3.0 nautical miles within the reef. (Waweru, 2012: 1). Using simple inputs, such as fishing nets or self-made traditional fish traps and either on foot or with sail or manually-propelled dug-out canoes, Kenya's coastal artisanal fishermen exploit existing coastal and marine fisheries resources for their subsistence and commercial wellbeing. According the Marine Fisheries Frame Survey of 2012 (SDF, 2012) which covered landing sites from the furthest point at the Kenya-Tanzania Border in south to the north most landing site at the Kenya-Somali border, the coastal and marine waters fisheries give employment to 13,706 artisanal fishers. Kenya's marine fisheries are characterized by mainly artisanal fishers who range from fishers on foot (foot fisher) to fishers using non-mechanized and mechanized fishing crafts. The number of fishers has increased progressively from 2004 to in July 2012-both years when Marine Frame Surveys were conducted; there has been an estimated increase of about 52% within this period. This ultimately means a corresponding increase in fishing effort in the waters and the expected decline in per capita catch, which would translate into lower per capita earnings for the fishermen. Population growth, along with high levels of poverty in the coastal regions, has contributed to increases in the number small-scale fishers (Ochiewo, 2009).

Despite the economic significance of the artisanal marine fisheries sub-sector - approximately 80% of Kenya's total marine production comes from shallow coastal waters and reefs (Fondo, 2004), most of Kenya's artisanal marine fishermen live in abject poverty. The poverty in these communities is characterized by the chronic insufficiency of income, much of which the fishermen attribute to their dire lack of suitable fishing gear. From my regular interaction with these fishermen (I work as a Research Socio-economist with the national fisheries research institution) I often hear the fishermen

argue that their small, non-motorized vessels cannot allow them venture into deeper waters where fish are plentiful; their claims may be somewhat justified given that much of Kenya's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is exploited by vessels from Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN). The inshore fisheries that artisanal fishermen have access to are consequently increasingly overexploited meaning they yield progressively smaller catches. The resulting meager earnings of the artisanal fishermen translate into severe deprivation within their households, manifested in the unfavorable socio-economic conditions in which many of their communities exist. These are conditions I have observed over the years working with these communities all the way from Vanga in the south coast, to Faza in the north.

Fishing activity is generally shrouded by uncertainty. Artisanal fishermen are poorly equipped to face the ravages of the sea. They have no, or very weak, bargaining power (given their lack of storage facilities) and their earnings are subject to major fluctuations, and are often at the 'mercy' of exploitative middlemen. In many cases the middlemen or some wealthy local ('*tajiri*') are the owners of the gear and vessels used by the artisanal fishermen. They often act as providers of (very exorbitantly charged) credit to the fishermen (Hoorweg et al, 2001). Poor incomes negate or severely limit the opportunities available to artisanal fishermen to cater for their families. The fisherman in his¹ very weak financial position must nonetheless exercise some form of agency in an effort to provide for his family. Poverty occurs when there is absolute deprivation in terms of a person's capabilities, which relates to their relative deprivation in terms of commodities, incomes and resources (Sen, 1983). This study was motivated by one question: Did the agency exercised by the fishermen (fishing households) result in any transformative development in their lives? Agency (whether individual or a communal) refers to the powers and capabilities one possess and which they can exercise, which makes them active entities constantly intervening in the course of events going on around (Barnes, 2000). I formulated three specific objectives that would allow for a logical understanding of this subject of poverty amongst small-scale fishermen; these related to the community's understanding of poverty, their specific coping strategies and finally the outcomes of these responsive actions.

The poverty suffered by Mkomani's artisanal fishermen forces them to exercise various forms of agency, be it individual or collective, in a bid to ensure theirs and their families' survival. Collective agency occurs when people act together (Hewson, 2010). This study was able to establish that the collective agency undertaken by a group of local fishermen has resulted in some transformative development in their livelihood through the improvement of their fishing capacity.

¹ While I refer to the male gender here, I wish to emphasize that this study was focused on members of **fishing households** - which included females

1.1 Issue of concern

Approximately 80% of the Kenya's fish catch is landed by artisanal fishermen. Despite the substantial earnings that marine artisanal fishermen contribute to the Kenyan economy they have long been mired in miserable social and economic conditions, all of which are symptomatic of the dire poverty that afflicts them. These communities are necessarily forced to exercise their agency in order to survive. Does this agency however result in any positive transformation in the lives of these fishermen? Transformative Development refers to any kind of growth that results in a change for the better; i.e. movement forward on a positive path. Transformational change, a related term, refers to the process whereby positive development results are achieved and sustained (UNDP, 2011)

I believe there is a gap in the knowledge available on how small-scale fishing households/communities cope with their poverty: what factors influence the responses they take? What are the consequences of these actions on their households? The resources they rely on? The poverty experienced by Kenya's coastal artisanal fishing communities is a microcosm of the wider poverty experienced at the national level. Current statistics have 46% of Kenya's population living below the poverty threshold of 1.25\$/day (UNICEF, 2013). Addressing poverty amongst the country's population is one of the foremost goals under the economic pillar set in the country's development blueprint, the Vision 2030. This study was intended to provide a much needed contribution to the subject of poverty in Kenya's artisanal marine fisheries, which I believe has not been adequately addressed in research. Any policy action needs to be based on valid evidence. This undertaking was my contribution to providing that evidence.

1.2 Research purpose

This phenomenological study sought to examine how the artisanal fishermen in the Mkomani area of Mombasa in coastal Kenya dealt with the poverty they experienced, and further, to determine whether the agency they exercised resulted in any transformative improvement in their livelihoods. The participants involved in the study were fishermen, their spouses, fish traders and four key informants.

In order to obtain the answers to the topic of my inquiry I sought to ask the following research questions:-

- How did my research subjects (members of the community) understand poverty?
- What coping strategies did the community employ in addressing their poverty?
- Did collective agency result in any transformative development within the community?

1.3 Assumptions

Prior to the commencement of this research I held two assumptions which I was hoping to draw conclusions on at the end of my study:-

- i. Poverty in the artisanal fishing communities was caused by overfishing
- ii. Collective agency in the artisanal fishing communities was prevalent

Chapter 2: Research procedure

This study utilized a Cross-sectional research design given to conduct the research on the poverty experienced by artisanal fishermen in Mkomani – an urban centre within Kisauni constituency of Mombasa County in Kenya’s coastal region. Mkomani is located about 8 kilometres north-east of Mombasa’s central business district (see Appendix II). The selection of Mkomani as my study area was based on two major factors: firstly, the location is close to both my place of residence and my place of work (the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute). This made accessibility to the study site relatively easy. Secondly, having lived and worked in the area for a good number of years I had become familiar with the residents of the area, some of whom indeed were artisanal fishermen. This made the whole research exercise a little easier.

I chose to use the Phenomenological research tradition to conduct this research as I wanted to understand the essence of the artisanal fishing community’s conception of one aspect of their reality, their poverty (Cresswell and Clark, 2006). I wished to see what poverty meant to them and what measures they took combat it. Being a phenomenological study focusing on poverty I had two criteria on which my purposive participant selection was based: (i) My participants had to either be artisanal fishermen, part of an artisanal fishing household or engaged in a fishing-related livelihood (ii) The participants must have expert knowledge on matters concerning artisanal fishing. Unfortunately due to constraints with time I was unable to conduct a formal pilot study. By walking through the village and asking a few questions I was able to identify and meet a prominent resident of Mkomani and former successful fisherman, Mr. Abdallah Athmani², who provided me with some basic information on artisanal fisheries in the area. Through him I was able to meet a few local fishermen, two of whom I recruited as my field assistants for (both of these assistants were named Ali). They were able to identify the fishermen and spouses of fishermen who would comprise two separate focus groups. I made use of the services a local resident and friend, Salim, to identify and mobilize five female fish traders who would make up the third focus group. The use of local residents to mobilize the focus group participants was my preferred method as they were well known to these residents and would therefore be able to easily convince them to participate. Informal discussions with local fishermen in the village revealed two relatively close landing sites, soon after which I made introductory visits to the Tamarind and Kenyatta beach (Samaki Lane) landing sites; Kenyatta beach being some distance away required me to use public transport to reach it. At both landing sites I spoke to the respective beach leaders, Jaffer Kimonge and Abdallah Amri, explained my intended mission

² Names of participants were only included in this paper if they had provided their consent to this. I have omitted the names of participants who did not wish to have their names disclosed

and organized the times and dates I would conduct my key informant interviews with them. During all these preliminary discussions I did make it clear that my intended activity was purely a research undertaking. This was a very important point to drive home in order to dispel any notion that I might be the bearer of certain “benefits” for the community. I contacted a local State Department of Fisheries official, Principal Fisheries Officer Mrs. Mwaka Barabara, through email and arranged a date for me to interview her at her office.

Mkomani is an area of stark contrasts: it is home to a considerable number of luxurious, sea-front residences on one hand, whilst in the neighboring village more modest, traditional Swahili-style concrete walled houses with iron sheet roofing clutter next to each other. Mud-walled, thatch-roof structures can be found in between these houses. The residents of Mkomani are predominantly Muslim, although the number of non-coastal inhabitants in the area has been on the rise.

My data on poverty experienced by the artisanal fishermen in Mkomani was obtained using two key qualitative research instruments: Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. I was also able to occasionally observe respondents and their environments. The use of Key informants was intended to tap the knowledge of those with vast experience on the subject of artisanal fisheries in Mkomani, as well as on knowledge on how this sub-sector has evolved over the years. Key informant interviews allow a researcher to obtain (quality) information from knowledgeable people, while also presenting the opportunity to explore unanticipated areas that may emerge in the course of the interview. This interview is relatively inexpensive and easy to carry out (USAID, 1996). Focus group discussions were my preferred research instrument for members of the fishing community because it provided the means to tap information from respondents which gave them the latitude to adequately express themselves; giving respondents the opportunity to give open-ended responses I felt would yield deeper, richer data. I was able to collect these concentrated set of interactions over the relatively short period (1 hour) these discussions were held. Focus group discussions I felt would be more suitable for capturing the motivations behind and the actions involved in the community’s agency in responding to poverty. This instrument also made it easier to conduct less structured interviews; it was possible to give participants in the groups control over the direction of the discussion (Morgan, 1997). The use of participatory data collection methods (such the focus group discussion) was intended to minimize the issue of power that is often inherent in the interviewer-respondent dynamic. The Participatory research methodology (particularly focus groups) effectively revealed and tapped into the multiple intelligences *and* realities that exist within the community.

Three key informants were interviewed, viz.: a prominent resident of Mkomani and former successful fisherman, the local village elder who was also the leader of the fishermen’s group based at the Kenyatta beach and a

Principal Fisheries Officer (PFO). Three focus group discussions were held, comprising local female fish traders, local artisanal fishermen and thirdly the mother and spouses of three local fishermen. The first focus group with five female fish traders was conducted at about 2pm in a shaded area of a public park adjacent to the village, where the Ludwig Krapf monument is located. We had to wait for two of the traders who were held up in negotiations with fishermen over pricing of the fish. I moderated the discussion with two of my assistants transcribing the interview and taking photos as the session progressed. The second focus group with five local fishermen was held in the center of the village where one of the participants owned a structure which was currently undergoing construction. We were able to get seating space there and conducted the session for about an hour-and-a-half. Two of my office assistants transcribed the interview and took pictures of the proceedings. The final focus group involving the mother and spouses of three fishermen (brothers) took place in their homestead in what might be referred to as the cooking area (see Appendix III). The discussion took place as the participants continued their domestic chores (this included washing dishes, preparing food and even suckling an infant). Many of the household's children were seated around the women as the conversation went on. I was able to make digital recordings of all the sessions once I had obtained consent from the participants to do so. For the focus groups the interview schedule for the fishermen, spouses and the women fish traders was basically similar, with only slight variations. The interview schedules for the Mr. Athmani, Mr. Amri and Mr. Kimonge were similar; the schedule for Mrs. Barabara however was unique and concerned issues of fisheries management and their relevance or connection with the poverty of the artisanal fishing community.

2.1 Epistemological position

Prior to this project I was well aware of the sensitivity of the topic to subjects I was going to research on. I made sure that the questions asked were framed in as non-offensive a manner as possible. Being the one asking the questions I was able to frame and reframe the questions asked in the way I felt would not be harmful to the participants in any way. In addition I always sought consent from all participants before using my digital recorder or having any photos of them or their houses taken. Unfortunately my efforts at trying to be as considerate of my respondents as possible were not entirely successful. This was made evident when during my focus group discussion with the mother and spouses of three local artisanal fishermen. I had to stop the session prematurely after the mother was reduced to tears in the course of answering one of the questions. This was the most sensitive response I thought to make.

Credibility and Dependability in qualitative research are used to evaluate the integrity or trustworthiness of qualitative research. Credibility refers to whether the respondents' views are accurately depicted by the researcher. Dependability refers to whether it is possible to trace the techniques used to gather and analyze the data (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). The issue of credibility and dependability within my study was a little problematic. "Internal validity refers to the extent to which researchers' observations and measurements are accurate representations of some reality. Are researchers actually observing or measuring what they think they are observing or measuring?" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 43). With respect to dependability, I tried to ensure that that all participants in the respective focus groups were as homogeneous as possible (Thyer, 2001). I enlisted the services of my two field assistants, who, both being long-time residents of the area, I trusted to recruit the most appropriate participants for my study. Though I was quite touched by the poverty and nature of the lives led by my respondents, I did strive to record as objectively as I could all that they said, and remain as close to their direct (descriptive) statements and what personal meanings I deduced they were trying to convey (*ibid*). Through detailed accounts of my conversations with the respondents, the (hopefully) specific explanations of how my data was obtained, as well as the different data collection instruments used I have attempted to provide credibility and dependability to the research I conducted.

2.2 Scope and Limitations

The delimitation in my research was by way of restricting my study area only to Mkomani. In addition, my study group of interest was only the artisanal fishing household. I was only concerned with the perspectives of the fishing household (fisherman as well as their spouses) with respect to what poverty meant to *them* and how *they* responded to it. The choice to spatially limit my research in this way was simply because of my limited resources, in terms of time, as well as access to transport.

One of the major limitations to my study, was the limited duration of time I had at my disposal to conduct this study. While I did obtain what I regard as quality data, an extra two months I think would have helped me uncover more evidence pertaining to the questions I was asking. Personal obligations, as they always do, forced me to be away from this activity for a whole two weeks. Also related to the time factor was the question of accessibility of participants. While for the most part I did get the respondents I had initially targeted, I did miss out on several intended participants who were not available at the time the study was conducted. Had I had more time to conduct the study I may have been able to accommodate these potential respondents and benefit from what I believe was a wealth of information on my topic of research.

2.3 Epistemological reflections of poverty research

According to Davis (2009:1) ontological ideas in research are usually thought of before epistemological ones. Sometimes however epistemological considerations do come first and in this way affects the ontological idea of the topic of research. He states that the types of indicators used by both qualitative and quantitative researchers affect the way both groups regard poverty. Quantitative researchers would focus on the quantitative features of poverty, whilst those in the qualitative camp would dwell more on the multidimensional (contextual) aspects.

From a Positivist epistemological standpoint, there is only one reality that can only be understood through empirical observation. According to this paradigm everything should be based on verifiable evidence - derived either from experiments or from observation. It considers rational reasoning and empirical facts based on real observations of the world as the only ways of generating knowledge. This approach is also known as the Orthodox approach. Gruffyd-Jones (2001:2, 4) asserts that this flawed Orthodox approach used by the World Bank ignores/prevents the identification of social relations that systematically generate poverty. The approach fails to consider the non-empirical that produce the empirical. The Orthodox approach is considered to be 'weak' in that it does not account for causation. Explaining an outcome (such as poverty) in peoples' lives requires causal judgments to be made. Statistical techniques on which the Orthodox is approach is largely based cannot in any way confirm causal mechanisms (Davis, 2009: 2).

The Critical Realist (CR) perspective, mainly associated with Roy Bhaskar, considers reality (read: poverty) as comprising three layers: the actual (pattern of events), the real (observable aspects of these events) and the real (the structures responsible for the generation these events). Poverty here is the result of a variety of factors and cannot simply be attributed to monetary causes (Dinni and Lippit, 2009:8). The Critical Realist approach regards reality as an 'open' and dynamic system subject to change. It emphasizes causation through structural processes and accepts that it is not possible to establish the truth about reality. The research here is considered to be part of reality as a dependent observer (Siegmann, 2014). This 'structuralist' view of reality is accommodative of the fundamental, though not overtly discernible causes of social phenomena - such as poverty. In the context of a poor fishing community, the observed poverty may be incorrectly accounted for merely by observable (empirical) attributes – perhaps the lack of education amongst fishermen or the use of traditional, less productive gear. The existing poverty may however be the result of more structural, deep-rooted causes.

I consider the element of objectivity in social research to be validated by the lived realities of those being studied. My study on poverty in fishing communities relied on the lived experiences of my respondents as being the objective truth. This idea is echoed by Campbell et al (2006: 276) who very fittingly points out that even though frameworks for understanding poverty can be developed to high levels of complexity, they do not detract from the fact that the only people who can really define what poverty means are the poor themselves. Their reality is what I would consider as the objective truth. From a CR perspective the social situatedness of the studied communities is their reality. Associated with this reality is the situated knowledge they possess. Only the fishing communities actually know the reality of what poverty means to them. Their responses would thus constitute in my view an objective means of knowledge generation.

For this study I chose to look at poverty experienced from one paradigmatic position: the critical realist perspective. While the focus group participants were able to provide more than ample empirical evidence of the poverty in fishing households, only the key informants were able to shed any light on the likely structural causes of the problem. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that none of the key informants were experiencing the level of poverty the participants in the focus groups were. For the latter, it occurred to me, that their lives were so preoccupied with trying to stay alive that dwelling on what exactly was the cause of their predicament was not given much consideration. The apparent institutional (policy) failure to address the plight of the artisanal fishermen, based on the unanimous responses to this effect, would indicate the need for the application of research to the issue of poverty, given its significance to the country's social and economic development.

Chapter 3: A review of past poverty research

3.1 Residual and Relational approaches to poverty

According to Gruffyd-Jones (2001: 5), poverty can be viewed as a condition in which human needs are not adequately met and the realization of various human powers is restricted or prevented. Hickey and du Toit (2007) state that the Residual approach to poverty sees it as the result of persons/communities being excluded from developmental activity, and as a result failing to enjoy the benefits of the associated (economic) growth. The approach assumes that only by participating in markets can a person/community enjoy these benefits. The Relational approach underscores the degree to which development, growth and the market system can create poverty. This approach looks at the causes of poverty from the lens of the social relations of production, of assets and of power - each of which is associated with certain forms of development. The Residual approach attributes poverty to the exclusion of the poor from the development process and consequently from the benefits entailed therein. This exclusion necessitates the exertion of agency by the omitted groups as the only means of survival or the betterment of their circumstances. Wood (2003: 465) as quoted in Hickey and du Toit (2007:7) observes that, ironically, agency is a factor in both the reduction and reproduction of chronic poverty. For the poor, pursuing (the essential) short-term livelihood strategies to fulfill immediate needs means a postponement of more advantageous forms of social capital – those that would yield longer term benefits. Social capital will vary with different groups in a community: in a case where the poorest members do not have access to effective social capital, whereas those better off do. This could result in emergence and perpetuation of inequalities and class reproduction ('negative social capital') as the latter group seeks to maintain or improve its own benefit. The result is that poverty/inequality/class is sustained as a result of a one particular group looking out for itself and in the process 'excluding' other groups (Coleman, 1988).

The poverty experienced by artisanal fishermen in coastal Kenya (like in any other region in the world) forces them to seek ways to ensure they and their families survive: this requires the exercising of their agency. Such agency may or may not result in positive outcomes for these fishermen. This review is limited to the Poverty-Agency-Transformative Development continuum that poor artisanal fishermen undergo. It must be noted however that not all poor fishermen are fortunate enough to experience the final stage. This three-stage process formed the basis of the research I conducted. Literature on the three concepts is examined. This review begins with several definitions of poverty, followed by an evaluation of research findings on the causes of poverty in the country. Literature on the perception of poverty in artisanal fishing communities is then discussed. The concept of Agency in the artisanal fisheries context is described from an empirical standpoint. Transformative Development is considered with respect to benefits derived from collective action in coastal fishing communities.

Poverty has several clusters of meaning. Income poverty (or its usual proxy Consumption poverty) is what can be measured and this method allows for comparison of different measurements. Material lack is a cluster of meaning that includes a lack of income as well as of other household assets – such as clothing, shelter, radios and beds. Capability deprivation (derived from Amartya Sen) refers to what one can or cannot do or be. Another understanding of poverty takes a view of deprivation as being the result of several mutually reinforcing dimensions (Chambers, 2006). The Social Exclusion approach describes the process of marginalization and deprivation. It is a reminder of the multiple faces of deprivation. The value of this method lies in the fact that it is the only one of many approaches explaining poverty that focuses essentially on the processes and forces that allow deprivation to emerge and exist. The Participatory Approach seeks to involve community members themselves in determining exactly what it means to be poor and what the magnitude of their poverty is. It focuses on the processes, causes and outcomes of poverty as perceived by the poor (Laderchi *et al*, 2006). Other measures assign a more qualitative meaning to it, which includes insufficient nutrition as well as more abstract and difficult to measure constructs such as freedom and spiritual well-being (human poverty). Qualitative measures of poverty are more in-touch with the non-income or material aspects of people’s lives. According to Dessailen (2000) Qualitative data generated on poverty may present a more insightful depiction the situation as compared to quantitative data. Through the use of participatory methods to obtain subjective perceptions of poverty, an epistemology of poverty which relies on local understanding and perceptions has gained popularity (Maxwell, 1999). The Interpretivist approach draws on concepts that positivists ignore such as self “consciousness,” “freedom of choice,” and meanings. The world is interpreted through trends and through the logic of situations, not the laws of social reality. It is easier to understand people’s perceptions concerning their own behaviours through a detailed and qualitative manner in pursuit of knowledge (Kura, 2012).

The Second Poverty in Kenya report (Vol. II, 2000: 20) adopts the material well-being perception of poverty. It defines people suffering from poverty as:

“Those members of society who are unable to afford minimum basic human needs, comprised of food and non-food items”

Kabubo-Mariara and Ndeng’e (2004: 7) in a document on Kenya’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper described poverty in Kenya as:

“The inadequacy of income and deprivation of basic needs and rights, and lack of access to productive assets as well as to social infrastructure and markets”

Human poverty encompasses a multiplicity of dimensions associated with poverty. It includes deprivation on a material level, e.g. lack of proper diet, clothing, shelter, and work. It also includes social deprivation, such as

denial of employment, participation in social institutions, and education (Weisfeld-Adams and Andrzejewski, 2008: 2). Poverty may also be seen as encompassing different dimensions of deprivation that relate to human needs, including consumption and food security, health, education, rights, voice, security, dignity and decent work (FAO, 2005: 5). I choose however to use the definition of poverty as provided by Amartya Sen (1983:153), which states:

“The absolute deprivation in terms of a person's capabilities, relates to relative deprivation in terms of commodities, incomes and resources”

All the definitions mentioned above share a common thread: they refer to poverty in terms of the concepts of deprivation or incapacity.

Ochiewo (2009) provides comprehensive statistics on Kenya's marine fisheries sector – including landings, its contribution to total national catch as well as to the country's Gross Domestic Product. He cites poverty as one reason for the dependence of Kenya's coastal communities on fishing as a livelihood. Poverty in the small-scale fishing communities is also attributed to the growing population which results in greater numbers depending on the fisheries for their survival. The coast region suffers from severe poverty levels, ranging from about 30% in Bura constituency, to an alarming 80% in Ganze constituency. Low levels of education and literacy significantly contribute to the vicious cycle of poverty as those without education are unable to effectively compete for employment opportunities, and are thus condemned to relying on extraction of natural resources (such as fishing) for their existence. The absence of vocational or other opportunities for youth who fail to progress in formal education would indicate a residualist manifestation of poverty. Environmental malpractices, such as felling of mangroves, negatively affect fishing activity, which ultimately translates into lower catches and therefore lower incomes and less food for fishermen. Secondary data sources were used in the compilation of this report. No mention is given to the agency exercised by the coastal communities in dealing with their poverty. Cinner (2009) used a quantitative household and fishers' survey for his research on poverty and the use of destructive fishing gears in three east African communities living adjacent to marine protected areas. The survey identified the inability of fishermen to mobilize sufficient finances to extract themselves from their low-income situation as a key cause of their poverty. The key finding was that the fishermen who used destructive fishing gear were found to be young and poorer (and therefore with little or no capital invested in the fishery). He cites limited employment alternatives and lax enforcement as the factors responsible for the continued malpractice. Artisanal fishermen have long felt betrayed by the existing market mechanisms and practices (particularly those of middlemen). In their view, exploitative financial arrangements with traders coupled with what they regard as oppressive regulations (particularly those set by the government) collude to deny them any opportunity to grow - i.e in terms of their earnings or asset base. A key finding of Abila's (2003) research on fish trade and food security in Lake Victoria was that poverty in fishing households is closely related to the health of the fishery. The author made

use of secondary data in this research. Overfishing in the lake is having increasingly serious impacts on household poverty levels. High dependency ratios exacerbated the worsening poverty experienced by these fishery-dependent households. The overfishing mentioned is caused by the absence of alternative sources of employment. The failure of the authorities to adequately address this problem would suggest an exclusionary (residualist) origin of poverty suffered by the affected fishing communities. Coping techniques or mechanisms to tackle the poverty faced by poor fishing households are however not mentioned.

Béné and Friend (2011) contend that poverty in small-scale fisheries cannot be reduced to a simple correlation between income poverty and fishery dependence; they assert that there is no logical, verifiable link between fishing and poverty. The authors highlight that socio-institutional factors (such as debt and lack of access to social services) are just as responsible for poverty as falling productivity in fishing. Failure to provide the poor with basic social services directly omits them from the development process. Using empirical data from the Volta (West Africa) and Mekong (mainland South-east Asia) basins the authors demonstrate that poverty experienced by fisher-folk is more often than not due to their extreme geographical and political remoteness. They stress the need to incorporate into any poverty studies an understanding of the vulnerabilities and marginalization fishing communities are subject to. While this study was based on the inland fisheries of two basins the authors consider their analysis applicable to coastal fisheries. Little reference is made though regarding *how* these communities respond to their poverty – apart from mentioning that their adaptive capacity is usually low. Meewari (2009: 138) states that the insensitivity of government (development strategies) to the needs of the poorer people in the population was repeatedly mentioned as a cause of poverty during her research on wellbeing in rural India.

Islam and Chuenpagdee (2013) assert that poverty in coastal fishing communities may be caused by resource-scarcity (particularly financial, but also infrastructural), coupled with the increased vulnerability to risks and shocks. This is the case with the Sundarbans fishing community in south-west Bangladesh. A qualitative study was conducted in three fishing communities living at the edge of the mangrove forest. Empirical data was obtained through Individual and Key Informant interviews, as well as Participant Observation. Descriptions of the fishers' livelihood, the factors responsible for shocks on their households, factors that can mediate these shocks and strategies to deal with shocks are mentioned. Risk factors that affect the fishing households are listed. Fluctuation in food prices has a major impact on these households. Lack of resources forces them to make use of mainly traditional fishing gear and crafts. However, the huge financial expenditures of households (which also includes payments to the one weighing the fish at the landing site, commission agents and money lenders demanding their dues) forces fishers to resort to illegal activities (such as fishing or logging). This scenario creates a vicious cycle of exploitation and

corruption. The result is a community characterized by high levels of income and human development poverty. Scarcity of resources (both financial and material) would condemn fishermen to a position of subordination in the social relations of production. This would suggest a relational manifestation of poverty. Loss of a husband (perhaps resulting from an attack by the tigers inhabiting the neighbouring mangrove forest) may sometimes result in the social exclusion of a widow in the community, which can lead her and her dependents into abject poverty. Roba and Mwasi's (2006) study reveals the key determinants of poverty in Kenya as: having access to a poor resource base; lack of or limited economic alternatives; low levels of socio-economic development; harsh and unpredictable climatic conditions; exploitation by the rich and being confined to a situation of social or economic entrapment. The study does not however mention coping strategies used by the respondents to deal with their poverty. The factors responsible for poverty as mentioned in the study are reflective of both the residual and relational roots of poverty.

Kristjanson *et al* (2010) conducted a mixed-methods nationwide survey in Kenya examining the reasons behind household movements into and out of poverty. The study employed the Stages of Progress methodology which was developed to assess both the dynamics of poverty and the causes behind them. It is a participatory methodology that relies on community definition of poverty at a household scale. While this study had the advantage of having a significant sample size it did not devote attention to the means and methods used by the respondent households to fight poverty. Shirazi (1993: 320), in a qualitative paper that includes references to the Quran, presents the perception of poverty from an Islamic framework. A definition of the poor is provided. The author explains that social and economic environments greatly determine how a society conceptualizes poverty. The lack of sufficient resources to meet the necessities of life is considered within the Islamic framework as suitable criteria to classify someone (or a household) as poor. It is worth noting that the majority of respondents in my study were of the Islamic faith. From an Islamic point of view a person is considered *miskin* (needy) if despite working his earnings are not sufficient to meet his needs. The minimum basic needs that must be met include food, clothing, medical care, shelter and education (*ibid*: 324). This explanation very accurately portrays the situation experienced by Mkomani's artisanal fishermen. The document focuses on how poverty is understood in an Islamic context but does not consider how victims of poverty respond to the problem. Béné (2003) gives mention to the exogenous origin of poverty; the assumption here being that because alternative incomes (outside the fisheries sector) are usually low, this drives (keeps) fishermen's incomes at low levels through mechanisms of labor transfer between sectors (*ibid*: 5). Forms of exclusion in the sector that ultimately result in poverty are stated, including economic and social exclusion. However, the paper gives neither mention as to what poverty actually means to fishermen, nor to the agency they exercise as a result. According to Hara (2011: 253) the term "poverty" for the poor artisanal fishing communities can be taken to mean: falling from one's station in life, loss of one's status, loss of one's instruments of

labor, lack of protection, exclusion from one's community, being abandoned, infirmity or facing public humiliation.

Agency (whether individual or a communal) refers to the power and capability someone has and can use, which makes them functioning units constantly involved in what is happening around (Barnes, 2000). Using secondary data Campbell et al review response of coastal populations to poverty. The coastal poor do not remain idle in the face of poverty: they adapt to the inherently dynamic nature of their environment. They however now find themselves having to contend and cope with more competition in the coastal zone, in which access to the resources they depend on is becoming more and more restricted, while the opportunities based on the use of natural resources in general are becoming increasingly limited. For many coastal people who depend on natural resources, current changes require that they adapt or face marginalization or displacement from where the resources they rely on are found. Many of the coastal poor have been trying to escape or at least deal with their poverty through livelihood adaptation (Campbell *et al*: 2006, 282). Legislative prohibitions in the Gulf of Mannar force many of the coastal poor to nevertheless engage in illegal access of reef fisheries. Unlawful light-fishing in Ghana is motivated by a declining in catches. The coastal poor may diversify their income-earning activities to both supplement their income and reduce risk, or even move into new alternatives; for this migration is sometimes the available option. Coping may involve accepting lower short-term livelihood expectations and probably increased risks, for example, through illegal fishing. It may also mean utilizing any savings that may have been made or disposing of assets – such as a boat. This may mean abandoning their fishing to selling their labour on other people's land or boats. If children are at school, they may have to be moved into the workforce to contribute to household income (*ibid*).

Islam (2011) in his research titled *Living on the Margin: The Poverty-Vulnerability Nexus in the Small-Scale Fisheries in Bangladesh*, obtained qualitative data using individual and key informant interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Secondary data was gathered from published government and non-governmental organizations' documents. Islam refers to several coping methods used by poor Bangladeshi fishing households to obtain money for their survival. These include: persistence in fishing (even when catches are scarce) which targets juvenile fish – this activity may be done using illegal gear types; sharing responsibility with family members with each member contributing to the household's pool of income; borrowing money or foodstuffs through the informal social networks with relatives or neighbours in order to smooth consumption - this association is based on mutual trust reciprocity and kinship; dealing with money-lenders or engaging in non-fishing income-generating activities (*ibid*: 61). Islam and Chuenpagdee (2013) mention a reduction in fishing households' dietary variety and quantity as a coping strategy to deal with poverty. Women have the reputation of being better at saving money than men and often save money in secret as a form of insurance against misfortune. They have in some cases become the financial mainstay of fishing households (2012: 63). Diversification of income-earning activities is practiced by women, and in-

cludes working on shrimp farms, working as housemaids or net-making and repair. Removing children (both boys and girls) from school and putting them to work in various fishing-related jobs is another coping mechanism. The use of multiple fishing gears is a coping strategy fishermen use to ensure continued fishing activity despite the species variation brought about by seasonal climatic changes (*ibid*). The vulnerability of these fishing communities is the major hindrance to any attempts they make to exert their agency in combating poverty; vulnerability to: illness, climatic variations/disasters, and exploitative credit mechanisms. When poverty is at its worst and starvation is looming multi-family fishing households with limited access to fishing gear in Nicaragua's Marshall Point community will usually share them during the rainy season (Gonzalez, 2011: 304). Hara (2011) on the declining fisheries in the southeast arm of Lake Malawi provides some fishing community responses, including: investment in cheaper fishing gears; invention of new fishing techniques; introduction of new gear types; geographic and occupational mobility; business and livelihoods diversification. Targeting of lower-value species as a coping mechanism is also mentioned.

Marschke and Berkes (2006) explore the resilience of fishing households in two Cambodian villages by trying to understand livelihood challenges and how people deal with them. The diversification of household livelihood strategies is mentioned as an important coping mechanism. Social networks and reciprocal labour exchange are also used as means of ensuring the household gets what it needs to survive. Other coping methods are mentioned, viz: dried fish is used both for domestic consumption as well as to barter for rice; small businesses are operated from one's home; a family's income-generator may be sent (or insist on going) into the city to secure another income source; in some cases migration of the fisherman may occur if this is considered a viable way to enhance their livelihood; resorting to moneylenders is also an alternative sometimes used (2006:10). An important point made by the author is that coping strategies pursued in desperation (i.e. when there are no options) are very costly, and may involve disposal of productive assets, which produces a state of unsustainability within the household. This increases the vulnerability of the household. Often the choice of coping strategy is motivated by security and short-term gains, which limits the possibility of exploiting any potential options in future (Start and Johnson, 2004; Wood, 2003). The authors find that a household's resilience is a function of the coping strategy chosen.

In situations where poverty exists or is encroaching, the agency undertaken by those dependent on fisheries resources may either be in the form of independent, collective action or collective action in collaboration with an external party- either a governmental or non-governmental organization. Kurien (1991) analyses the collective responses of fisherfolk in Kerala necessitated by a fisheries crisis that was marked by both the reduced productivity (fish quantity and size), as well as by the growing asset and earning differences between artisanal fishermen and the newly-arrived owners of large mechanized fishing vessels. The collective responses were marked by

the conscious and participatory efforts of the fisherfolk to influence the state to initiate measures to co-manage the commons in ways which would ensure its sustainability (*ibid*: 9). Changing socio-economic and techno-ecological forces were the cause of the traditional fisherfolk's actions. Their collective action was primarily fuelled by the development of a sense of unity based on class, as opposed to status in the community. Heightened political awareness and organizational skill meant that the government had to listen to the fisherfolk. The formation of the Kerala Independent Fish-workers Federation (*Kerala Swatantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation* [(KSMTF)]) was intended to unify small-scale fisherfolk and allow them to pressurize government "from below" in a bid to gain protection for their livelihoods from the trawler menace that was very detrimental to them. Other collective action the fisherfolk engaged in included fasting, road-blocking and massive but peaceful processions, all of which had the desired effect of getting the government to give heed to their grievances and institute the desired reforms in the fishing sector. Individual responses to the fisheries crisis at the time came in the form of adoption of a newly-introduced technical innovation: the outboard boat engine (*ibid*). .

In reflecting on the lessons he learnt from his time spent working for the community in an Indian fishing village Kurien (2011) speaks of the crucial nature of bottom-up collective action as the bedrock of change in fishing communities. When people act in unison Collective Agency happens (Hewson, 2010). Members can act directly on their own or through an organization. In the context of natural resource management, even deciding on and observing rules for use or non-use of a resource can be considered collective (Meinzen-Dick And Di Gregorio, 2004: 3). Gonzalez (2011) hypothesizes that any agency directed at sustainable development has less chance of success if exercised solely by actors external to the resident community. This would imply that the greater the involvement of the local community, the grater the chances of any agency taken succeeding. In the context of the artisanal fisherman the mere alleviation (eradication might be too tall an order) of poverty implies some form of *continuity or sustainability* – either in his present occupation or in another form of livelihood. Efforts at agency, collective or individual, must address the aspect of longevity. Local fishing communities possess significant traditional knowledge on their marine ecosystem and would therefore be well-placed to ensure such longevity is factored in to any collective initiatives concerning their fisheries resource. Kraan (2009) describes the history and current situation of the Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishers, one of the coastal ethnic groups involved in fishing in Ghana. The author conducted a multiple-embedded case study, involving three villages. Each case in the study involved three sub-sets (individuals, households and companies). A mixed-methods approach was used, comprising questionnaires, interviews, household surveys and focus groups. Collective actions of the Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen in Ghana associated with the management of fisheries at local level are discussed. The fishermen have developed many institutions to regulate and organise their fishing business. Rules set by the fishermen (written and unwritten) are intended to solve problems or prevent the occurrence of the same. The author stresses the need for the knowledge possessed by the fishermen to be

linked to the global fisheries context. Local institutions should be embedded in reality, in-touch the realities of the fishermen and the heterogenous needs of the local community. Kraan (*ibid*) refers to a case in Senegal where artisanal fishermen collectively developed and implemented an output-limiting scheme for purse-seine and handline users in a bid to curtail supply and thereby raise the (very low) prices they received from the middlemen. Hara (2011) conducted a study to analyze the strategies of fishers on Lake Malawi in response to a decline in the stock of the 'chambo' species. Two research instruments were used in this research: Questionnaires and Secondary data (Fisheries Department Catch-Effort and Frame Survey data). As a form of agency during periods of declining catch, the fishermen became more assertive within their fishing units with regard to decisions on fishing operations. Their insistence saw them allowed to be involved in the auction process of the catch and also receive some allowance for their morning meal from the owner of the gear. Crew members also began to demand payment of their dues immediately the fish has been sold. The author calls suggests the increased application of collective agency in the management of the lake's fisheries. Such a move he claims would be more effective than relying on the poorly equipped government fisheries department. More involvement and responsibility on the part of the fishers with regard to the management of the lake's biological and economic viability is called for. Gonzalez (2011:308) explores management from the perspective of a fishing community located in the Pearl Lagoon basin of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Literature reviews on the research initiatives in the Pearl Lagoon region and Ethnographic field research (using questionnaires, interviews focus group discussions and field visits) were used in data collection. He refers to the active advocacy of one Nicaraguan artisanal fishing community (Marshall Point) before the government and non-governmental organizations which brought about some transformative changes; these came in the form of the provision of electricity, schools (elementary), a health clinic, and (limited) communication services (*ibid*). In San Salvador, a community-based coastal resource management arrangement fostered collective action by forming and strengthening local organizations. These organizations became responsible for marine resource management and income-generating projects, and were able to reduce overfishing and other destructive practices. One community in San Salvador was able to establish, with the help of government intervention, a marine sanctuary and reserve (Ahmed *et al*, 2004:15). Fishing communities have also exercised their agency by collaborating with governments or non-governmental agencies in the spirit of co-management of existing fisheries resources. Examples of successful co-management alliances include the Beach Management Units (BMU) operating in the inland and marine waters of Kenya, the Community Fisheries Organizations (CFi) in Cambodia and the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (FARMC) in the Phillipines (FAO, 2014: 59).

Hewson (2010) states that collective agency as occurs when people act together. Collective fish-worker organizations originated as far back as 1500 AD. These customary organizations were based on collective action which was identity-oriented, consensual and most importantly, community

initiated. Such old forms still exist in many countries to date (FAO, 2014: 45). Such organizations, whether formal or informal, respect local traditions and norms and normally allow locals access to the resource – particularly for consumption needs (*ibid*: 47) Collective arrangements in the fisheries sector have four major strengths: (i) they are founded on ethics held by the relationships the fishermen themselves enjoy (ii) the fishermen have a wealth of knowledge on the existing living and non-living resources found their fisheries (iii) they are adaptive and able to respond as circumstances demand, and (iv) they are built on values of trust, reciprocity, altruism, love, affection and appreciation³. It is worth mentioning that none of the literature I obtained on collective agency gave any mention to the sustainability (duration of success) of any of the initiatives undertaken. Collective action is often a prerequisite for the development of community-based institutions and the devolution of authority that is required from central to local authorities (Ahmed *et al*, 2004: 15). Collective action can empower poor communities. But effective co-management requires government to devolve real and substantial rights and responsibilities to representatives of fishing industry or groups of harvesters to achieve sustainable resource management. Moreover devolution of rights is generally not successful without collective action (*ibid*:16).

³ Member of a customary organization speaking at a workshop in Lombok, Indonesia in August, 2009

3.2 Theoretical foundation

The theoretical basis of this research is the Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen. This approach in my view best captures the status and the responsive actions of the Mkomani fishermen with respect to poverty. The approach considers what a person is able to be (their *being*) and able to do (their *doing*). Two main concepts are contained in this approach:

Functionings – these refer to a state of ‘being’ or ‘doing’; e.g. a fisherman *being* healthy, *being* in possession of good quality fishing nets

Capabilities – these refer to the functionings one has access to. Therefore one’s capability is the real freedom to choose between different combinations of functionings (also seen as the state of wellbeing) that one values

A Capability set refers to the entire group of functionings one can choose from (Wells, 2012).

Sen perceives *freedom* as the primary goal of development, as well as the key means by which to achieve it; development here is interpreted as well-being. He puts forward five freedoms as requisite for any form of development, viz: Political (e.g. the freedom to express one’s views), Economic (e.g. the freedom to access economic resources), Social (e.g. the freedom to receive social services, including social security), Transparency (e.g. the freedom to receive services from authorities that are reliable and have integrity) and Protective security (e.g. the freedom to receive social protection [particularly the most vulnerable] to avoid falling into severe deprivation) (Terry and Abdullat, 2004). The fisherman lives in an unfavorable state of ‘being’, characterized by dire insufficiency: insufficiency of money to simply live or to uplift his present status. In the context of my research I considered the fisherman’s agency as being a function of his capabilities. The capabilities of the poor fisherman are in turn enhanced through collective effort with fellow fishermen. The denial or limitation of these freedoms or capabilities (e.g. through the failure to receive services from government authorities or failure to receive social protection) restricts the poor fisherman’s capacity to improve his situation. The Capability approach allows for the conceptualization of the poverty experienced by Mkomani’s artisanal fishermen, i.e. by linking the causes of their poverty to their deprivations (poor states of ‘being’), and their agency (coping strategies) to the use and improvement of their capabilities.

3.3 Key Concepts

There are a number of negative factors responsible for the poverty experienced by the artisanal fishing household in coastal Kenya; these include: diminished fish catch (associated with overfishing and destructive fishing methods), inadequate fishing gear, lack of preservation facilities (which means they have no bargaining power), the vulnerabilities they are exposed to (particularly illness) and a lack of access to basic social services (including health, education and sources of affordable credit). The eventual outcome of this combination of negative influences on the fisherman is a persistent trend of very low catches, which translate into long-term, very low earnings. The continued inability of these earnings to meet the fisherman's needs cause him to fall into a state of *poverty*. In order to support himself and those dependent on him the fisherman must act, i.e. exercise his *agency*. The outcome of the fisherman's agency is two-fold: the fisherman may either experience some form of *transformative improvement* in his life or he may remain consigned to the state he presently finds himself in - living a life of destitution and unceasing hardship.

This entire research project was based in three main concepts: (i) POVERTY: what was its perceived meaning or how was it understood within the studied community? (ii) AGENCY: which coping strategies did the studied community make use of in trying to deal with its poverty? and (iii) TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT: was there any such outcome through the collective efforts of the community? My conceptual framework was therefore based on these three notions and their inter-relationship with respect to the artisanal fishing households of Mkomani. The literature reviewed similarly tried to focus on *these three concepts*, in as far as possible, with respect to coastal artisanal fishing communities in the third world.

No two geographical areas, throughout the world share identical physical. Similarly, the same might be said of peoples' perceptions: no two groups of people living in two different locations will have exactly the same ideas or perceptions. While Amartya Sen's Capability approach was my beacon in the foggy terrain of this research, I was eager to learn about the particular perspectives the fishing households in Mkomani held with regard to the poverty that had so seriously encumbered them. Each individual has his own views and idiosyncrasies – I was interested in discovering the views maintained by the people of Mkomani.

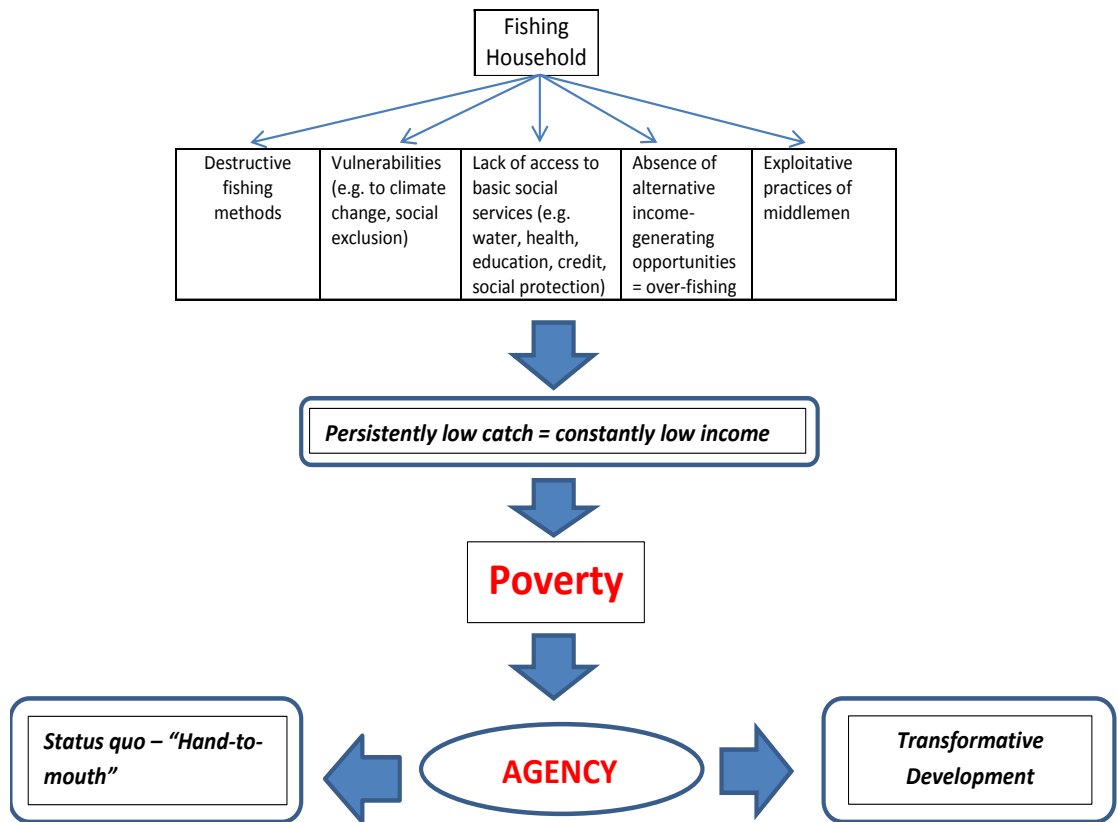


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The notion of poverty in this study was based on (most of) the participants' financial inability to acquire or achieve what they desired to improve their lives.

The idea of agency I was interested in was that which the participants in the study exercised in reaction to their poverty. Given that this phenomenon encompassed literally all aspects of their lives, the participants' agency was therefore largely centered on their poverty.

Chapter 4: Outcomes of field research

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the poverty affecting Mkomani's artisanal fishing community by understanding how the community perceived this poverty and how they were coping with it. I was also interested to discover whether any of the agency exercised by the community in their fight against poverty had yielded and transformational change in their lives. This chapter will present the responses received to each of my three research questions as given by the three focus groups (the women fish traders, the fishermen and the mother and spouses of three fishermen respectively), and my key informants (Abdallah Athmani, Abdalla Amri, Jaffer Kimonge and Mrs. Barabara respectively). The concluding section will highlight what the chapter has identified.

Mkomani, a coastal, urban location situated next to the affluent suburb of Nyali, about 8 kilometres north-east of Mombasa town centre offers beautiful views of the island of Mombasa. Mkomani village is populated mainly by indigenous ethnic groups, such as the Swahili, the Giriama and the Digo. Non-indigenous tribes such as the Kamba, Luo and Kikuyu are however making up an increasing segment of Mkomani's population. The predominant religion in the area is Islam and several mosques are located in Mkomani. The 'Kijiji' (meaning 'village' in the local language Kiswahili) is the term locals use to refer to Mkomani. The 'village' is however far more modern and urbanized than the term might imply; it is made up mainly of concrete-walled, Swahili-style houses roofed with iron sheets, although mud-walled, thatched-roof structures serving the poorest in the area are also visible. The roads within the village are not tarmacked, and coral rock in the ground can be seen in many places. The 'village' centre comprises of a variety of service stores offering modern consumer conveniences. Public transport into Mombasa is regular in the village. An indication of the poverty affecting the area's residents is presence of young men clustered in groups at the village centre every day, idly chatting away as early as ten am. They simply have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Illicit drug use among the male youth population in the village is prevalent.

4.1 Meaning of poverty

All five female fish traders interviewed in this study were in agreement that poverty meant the inability to adequately feed their families and educate their children. One of the traders, in addition, mentioned that poverty for her meant having to live in squalid housing. The fishermen in the focus group mentioned that poverty for them meant for a start meant having no financial ability whatsoever. This in turn meant lacking or having very poor (no pun intended!) quality fishing gear, which basically meant they were unable to fish productively. For all practical purposes this to the fishermen meant they did not have a job. As one of the participants in the fishermen focus group stated poverty meant the lack of money. This was aptly captured in the following statement: "Yes we are poor, because we do not have

the ability. Even if you asked any one of us here to produce 100 Ksh right now it would not be possible". Poverty, they added, also meant that they did not receive any assistance at all from the authorities. Their position of poverty made them vulnerable to the impunity of developers in the area whose irreverent acquisition of land denied the fishermen access to their sole source of livelihood, the sea. Sea-front properties command a more lucrative selling price and are therefore the preferred properties of real estate businessmen. Such properties in many cases happen to include access routes to the sea (usually just foot paths) used by local artisanal fishermen. This made the fishermen feel despised and abandoned. Insufficiency of money and the resultant inability to feed their families was the primary meaning the mother and spouses of the fishermen attached to poverty. Food insecurity and hunger were seen as synonymous with poverty according to them. "Even now we have struggled and managed to prepare this tea, but we have no idea what we will prepare at lunch time", said the mother. Poverty was also associated with helplessness as they claimed to have no recourse to address this problem. Related to their initial claim, the lack of money (capital) to start and maintain a small-scale business was mentioned as being in a situation of poverty. "Money follows money", stated one of the wives referring the fact that without money to start with you would not be able to acquire more. The association of poverty with experiences of being demeaned and despised was also true. In reference to this, one of the wives reported having overheard someone ask of her: "How could she marry someone like him?" (i.e. a poor fisherman). The inability to acquire or provide what was needed was a common comment in the course of all discussions on the meaning of poverty; "Hatuna uwezo" (we lack the ability) was frequently acknowledged.

According to my first key informant, Mr. Athmani, poverty for the small-scale artisanal fisherman in Mkomani meant a very marginal and exceedingly low standard of living. Mr. Amri, leader of the fishermen at Kenyatta beach related the meaning of poverty for the artisanal fisherman with having no *productive* fishing activity. He further mentioned the feelings of abandonment associated with the repeated lack of assistance from the relevant government authorities as being what poverty stood for for the fisherman: "To tell you the truth my brother, we small-scale fishermen [sic] they do not help us" he added. Jaffer Kimonge considered poverty for artisanal fisherman as being the situation where complete and total lack (of financial resources primarily) did not afford him the opportunity to plan in any way for his future. This meant his inability to afford the cost entailed in living in Mombasa, and his acceptance of the subsequently low standard of living in which he found himself. Mrs. Barabara of the State Department of Fisheries indicated that poverty for the artisanal fisherman meant a daily struggle to provide food and medicine for his household. Living each day with the risk of failing to get a catch, and so not being able to provide for his dependents, meant being in a constant state of uncertainty. If he was fortunate enough to get a catch today, the anxiety of wondering what the following day will have in store is not long in coming.

4.2 Agency (Coping strategies) employed to address poverty

Whenever one faces a problem a solution has to be looked for. The poverty faced by the artisanal fishing community in Mkomani requires that they exercise their agency, i.e. do whatever is in their ability to do, in what is literally a life and death situation. The coping strategies employed by the women fish traders involved looking for jobs as domestic workers in local homes. Some of them ventured into selling homemade fruit juice and other foodstuffs (such as peanuts) within the village. These income-generating activities were sought during low seasons when fish trading was no longer profitable enough. During these seasons the ladies mentioned, catches were low, prices higher and so customers fewer. Social networks were mentioned as an important strategy to seeing them through tight financial situations. Such networks with relatives and neighbours allowed them to borrow food or money to tide them along when times were lean. The ladies also used their networks with the fishermen who supplied them with fish to get supplies on credit whenever they did not have ready cash. A few of the participants in this group claimed to have joined local revolving funds as a means of mobilizing savings. Unfortunately, their weak financial positions could not accommodate the cost entailed in running the fish trade and make regular contributions to the fund. Fishermen in Mkomani cope with their poverty by looking for casual jobs; these include construction work, local garbage collection, selling of water to homes, filling pot-holes in local roads and being paid by passing motorists, acting as porters at the local market. Social networks were mentioned by the group as being crucial to their survival. Whenever a fisherman is short of cash either to feed his family, to seek medical treatment (either for himself or a member of his household) in the event of illness or to meet any other important financial obligation, he will always turn to his trusted fellow fisherman for help. Lack of sufficient money may mean that the fisherman does not have the appropriate footwear when he goes fishing. The respondents stated that they might ask a friend for a pair of worn out boots which they might use when fishing - to avoid injury from dangerous marine organisms such as Sea-urchins or Stonefish. At times, a friend may hear of an opening for a casual worker and inform the fisherman. In the event of an illness occurring within the household at a time when finances are unavailable to pay for treatment in hospital, the members of the household will resort to using traditional herbal remedies to cure the illness. While there is no guarantee that such treatments will cure the sickness this is the best course of action available to the fisherman given his financial status. All he and his family can then do is patiently wait and see whether the illness responds to the "cure" and subsides. Social networks also play a role within the village in terms of credit facilities available for the fisherman from various shops. Local retailers will usually extend a line of credit for insolvent fishermen to enable them acquire basic household necessities. This credit is however only given for a limited period, and the shop-owners will usually terminate it once the debt reaches a certain level. This facility is only restored once the fisherman has paid the outstanding amount. While this service may not be guaranteed for a very long period it certainly eases the difficulty faced in a fishing household when it is availa-

ble. Being on the lookout for any available jobs is a strategy that is essential for the fishermen.

During the time I conducted this interview, in late August, the Mombasa Agricultural Society of Kenya show was on at the Mombasa showground situated next to Mkomani village. This event (that runs for six days each year) provides a valued opportunity for the fishermen to secure short-term jobs in the show-ground, such as clearing grass, erecting stands and off-loading delivered exhibits and carrying them to the various stands. These jobs are highly prized by the fishermen particularly because they become available at a time of the year when fish in the sea are scarce.

This period marks the end of the '*kusi*' (south-east monsoon) season during which the sea is rough and artisanal fishermen are unable to venture into the sea. An important response I got from the fishermen related to God; the group mentioned that God had made a provision for each person every day, and it was therefore up to each one of us to accept whatever it is that we received on any given day – this included *not* receiving anything. Unfortunately, the coping strategies of the fishermen were very short-term in nature and usually provide relief for a maximum of probably several days. The mother and spouses of the fishermen lamented that on occasion there was simply no strategy they could use to cope with their situation but simply pray to God and persevere. When they did have a little money great attention was made to budgeting the money that was available; this might involve buying the smallest usable quantities of foodstuffs such as flour, keenly deciding what ingredients to use (or not to use). Tea was often made without sugar or milk in their household. Vegetables, which ordinarily were fried with tomatoes and onions, were sometimes boiled to avoid having to spend money buying these condiments. In their household this family simply made use of whatever was available to prepare a meal.

Mr. Athmani stated that the fishermen were only able to get casual jobs as a means of coping with their poverty. They simply did not have the financial capacity to do anything else. Abdallah Amri talked of members of fishing households self-medicating themselves with local herbal remedies when illness struck and money for formal medical treatment was not available. Thereafter the family simply persevered and put their faith in God to heal the sick member of their household. Mr. Yusuf of Kenyatta beach said that in order to ensure that each fishermen received at least some income from each day's fishing it was sometimes necessary to reduce the proportion of a day's earnings allocated for the following day's boat fuel in order to do so. This however had the disadvantage that the group would probably not be able to reach the most productive fishing grounds the following day. Social networks are an indispensable coping strategy for artisanal fishermen affected by poverty. This was Mr. Kimonge's view as he mentioned financial and food donations from relatives and friends were invaluable during lean times for the fishing household. Casual jobs such as construction also helped fishermen make ends meet. According to Mrs. Bararbara, as a means of coping when earnings are not forthcoming or are inadequate, the

fishermen will usually borrow money from their dealer (each fisherman usually has an established relationship with a particular dealer to whom he sells his fish).

Many of the coastal fishing communities are involved in agency through collaboration with government and other non-governmental agencies for the development of the artisanal fisheries sub-sector Mrs. Barabara stated. This collaborative effort she added is most clearly shown through the developmental activities of Beach Management Units (BMU). BMU are government-sanctioned community-based organizations that include fisheries sector stakeholders in the areas they have been established. The BMU work in collaboration with government with the aim of promoting the sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources by the communities; this invariably involves actions aimed at alleviating poverty within the communities, through for example the construction of concrete fish landing bandas – some with electricity and refrigerated storage. The BMU serve as ideal fora through which ideas and energies are collectively harnessed for the betterment of the artisanal fisheries sub-sector. There are at present 79 BMU in the coast province, 52 of which are fully registered, with the other 27 at different stages of the registration process. The BMU were formed as tools to facilitate the implementation of the co-management philosophy in the fisheries sector. Mrs. Barabara further noted that the artisanal marine fisheries sub-sector stood to benefit greatly through assistance from the ongoing Kenya Coast Development Project (KCDP). This was a World-Bank funded project which seeks to promote development in the coast province. With respect to the agency of local fishing communities, the project is hoping to boost their capacity to combat poverty through facilitation in various forms, including the *Hazina ya Maendeleo* – a development fund open to registered community groups involved any development-oriented activities. Mrs. Barabara however blamed the local communities' complacent attitude for the continued existence of poverty in the region. Their failure to exploit poverty-alleviating avenues made available to them (such as the introduction of interest free loans by numerous Islamic financial institutions) has seen the levels of poverty in the area sustained. She attributed this laxity to the inheritance and perpetuation of traditional attitudes and perceptions amongst the fisher-folk, the lack of education (as well as non-interest in education), the lack of general unity within the community and to the Islamic faith which tended to encourage a fatalistic attitude amongst its adherents. Being contented with whatever they had, as "tomorrow God will provide", fostered a culture of complacency within the community. As a result the motivation to save was for the most part non-existent. Disunity within the community robbed it of the ability to benefit from collective mobilization of both finances and ideas. Similar sentiments regarding a lack of unity amongst fishermen was expressed in the fishermen focus group. With respect to institutional support, the participants' feelings of abandonment by the state were reflected in their claims of being unaware of the ongoing Kenya Coastal Development Project (KCDP) - whose headquarters were about a kilometer away from where this study was undertaken.

4.3 Transformative development and collective agency

Transformative collective agency is not common within Mkomani's artisanal fishing fraternity. But where it exists it has had impressive results. Let me first however mention some responses from the study's participants as to why they were unable to experience the benefits of such agency. The women fish traders claimed not to have sufficient income to maintain their businesses and invest in any such undertaking as well. There was a surprising revelation (I thought) from the fishermen focus group which claimed that most fishermen do not get along well and each preferred 'to run his own show' - which therefore reduced the opportunity for collective agency amongst them. This comment however, was to be put to question at a later point in my study. The mother and spouses of the fishermen stated that they did not have enough money to feed their children, let alone make the investment that would provide them with transformative changes in their lives. Lack capacity was mentioned once again by Mr. Athmani – this time as the reason they could not engage in any investment that would provide them with transformative benefits in their lives. Mr. Kimonge claimed the fishermen from his landing site had once embarked on a mission to build a boat together; unfortunately this venture stalled due to lack of funds. He is however quick to express his dissatisfaction with the restrictive government regulations that seem to hinder rather than promote the small-scale fisherman. He mentions the failed attempts made by his group to get itself registered as a legitimate fishermen's group: the reason given being that their numbers did not qualify them to be recognized as a group. He notes that in other locations within Mombasa groups as small as his have, surprisingly, been registered. His group's failure to receive any assistance has also been because they have been unable to produce official receipts as proof of ownership of their vessels. This is simply because they build their own boats with monies donated from relatives and friends- which therefore have no official record (receipt).

The registered SSHFG based at the Mkomani's Kenyatta beach is an impressive example of the resilience and collective effort of small-scale fishermen in the face of repeated failure to get assistance from the authorities. Their determination and belief in self-determination has resulted in transformative benefits for the group. It is certainly an encouraging and indeed very commendable example of the transformative impact of collective agency. Speaking with Yusuf Mideche, the group's Chief fisherman, I learnt that the group has 25 registered members (artisanal fishermen). Each fisherman at the site contributes an initial membership fee, and a percentage of the value of each quantity of fish he lands. A portion of these communal funds are then utilized as operational expenses and a portion also set aside as savings. Through their collective contributions the fishermen have been able to set up an impressive landing site (known as a "*Bandari*" in Swahili) at a cost of about US\$ 2,840 [Ksh 250,000]. According to Yusuf the fishermen have benefitted greatly from the advice and financial donations of several visitors to the site, as well as from various workshops and training

seminars their members have been able to attend. The fishermen have a registered community group, the Subira Self-Help Fishermen Group (SSHFG). The site is operated on the principle of equality, with each member, irrespective of age or experience, being accorded the same privileges. The earnings from any day's catch (once the necessary deductions for the boat's fuel and other operating costs are made) are equally divided amongst the fishermen. The fishermen here are driven by the philosophy of self-reliance – an attitude apparently fostered by the repeated failure of the relevant government authorities (particularly the Fisheries department) to assist them. The group has a mentorship programme through which local male school-leavers or those who have failed to proceed with their education are taught fishing skills at the site in preparation for their eventual graduation into qualified fishermen. To date, the group has managed to acquire a fibreglass fishing boat (at the cost of US\$ 3,977 [Ksh 350,000]-the group paid a deposit of US\$ 1,704 [Ksh 150,000] and has been making payments since; it now has a balance on the boat of US\$ 1,704). The group has also acquired an outboard engine (at a cost of US\$ 2,840 [Ksh 250,000]-the group has been paying off the amount slowly and as at now has a balance of US\$ 1,136 [Ksh 100,000]). Mr. Amri was quick to point out that the SSHFG, despite being based at the coast, did not restrict membership on the basis of tribe, and that presently about a third of the group was made up of members originally from non-coastal regions of the country. Yusuf lamented over the authorities' failure to assist local fishermen. "Fishermen continue to suffer and the (fisheries) department is not close to us" he said.

The perceptions the participants in this study had of poverty were essentially the same: they referred to their lack of money and the consequent inability to do what they needed to (provide for their families and invest in what they needed, e.g. fishing nets, their children's education). Another aspect of the meaning given to poverty was the negative behavior the respondents were subjected to as a result of their status as poor people: abuse, despise, being ignored and overlooked. The following chapter will provide a synthesis of the findings made in this study. I will use the thematic analysis technique to try and develop categories from the participant responses and from these categories formulate themes.

Chapter 5: Synthesis of outcomes

The multi-dimensional nature of poverty makes it pervasive in all aspects of the lives of those it afflicts. For the purposes of my research however I concentrated on three specific poverty-related aspects, viz: the reality of (meaning attached to) the phenomenon; the agency exercised in a bid to combat this poverty; and thirdly, the transformative result of this agency. The notion of poverty I use is that which afflicts the artisanal fishing household in Mkomani, and which is characterized by a chronic and dire lack of income and the resultant incapability it produces. During the past three decades, the number of fishers globally has grown at a faster rate than the world's population (FAO, 2009). The increase in local fishing effort in Mkomani has resulted in diminished per capita catch, which ultimately contributes to the poverty experienced by its fishermen.

I chose to conduct a thematic analysis on the data collected during this study. Each of the themes obtained were related to the major categories derived from my conceptual framework, viz. poverty, agency and transformative development. Emergent descriptive codes and *in vivo* quotations from the data were used to develop categories from which then themes were derived (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). Answers on the themes generated are provided with respect to each of the three research questions. The focus groups used in this study were differentiated in terms of gender. That of fishermen consisted of males (mark you in some areas of the coastal region some women were sea-going fisher-folk); the focus groups of the fish traders and the spouses of fishermen comprised of females. The age differentials between the groups were relatively small: the ages of the fishermen ranged from 23 to 58 years, while that of the fish traders varied between 28 and 43. The mother and fishermen's wives' ages ranged from 26 to 57.

The answers to the meaning of poverty as provided by the respondents were individually coded and eventually resulted in the generation of two themes: those that related to (i) the **Inability** brought about by financial deprivation (these had more observable, physical connotations) and (ii) the **Psychological** impacts produced by the state of being poor. Both these themes are consistent with the *functionings* referred to by Amartya Sen in his Capability approach to poverty. The state of financial deficiency that was overwhelmingly mentioned by respondents put them all in a position where they were unable to do or acquire what was needed. The lack of money created a host of deprivations – of basic necessities such as food, shelter and drugs, as well as of being able to make either social or economic investments – like paying for children's school fees or acquiring livelihood items such as fishing nets. This inability meant that these fishing households were in actual fact unable to extricate themselves from their poverty and could either remain at the level there were or worse still, deteriorate further into poverty. Insufficiency of money meant poor nutrition for the family, which in the long run had dire implications for the families' health; in such a scenario chronic illness was not impossible, which had another serious implication

on the sufferer: repeated failure to receive proper medication may mean one's inability (again) to ever work productively. The inability occasioned on these fishing households by their poverty embroiled them in a vicious cycle of suffering that, sadly, could span an entire lifetime. The ominous and ever-lurking vulnerability to external shocks (specifically to illness) was a terrifying prospect to these households, given the mentioned inability. The second theme I derived related psychological impact within the fishing household created by the acute deprivation which their lives were characterized by. None of the focus groups interviewed could mention a time when they had received any form of state assistance to help them out with their poverty. They all felt they had been left to fend for themselves, the idea of which left them feeling utterly hopeless and constantly worried. This persistent worry had impacted on the health of the mother of the fishermen and she had had to receive medication for anxiety. To quote the leader of the fishermen at Kenyatta Beach: "To tell you the truth my brother, we small-scale fishermen [sic] they do not help us". None of the fishermen in this study had received *any* form of assistance from the government, despite several attempts to do so. Another fisherman commented that: "The wealthy have encroached on this (beach) area and now even access to the ocean is denied to us"; poverty also meant the inability to respond in any way to the land-grabbing actions of the wealthy who acquire land wherever they wish, with total disregard to anyone they may displace or disrupt in the process. This had also created in the fishermen feelings of resentment towards the responsible government authorities. Feelings of futility and despair were reflected in the question one of the wives said she kept asking herself when her husband did not get a good catch: "What kind of life is this? Is this really life?". The feeling of being despised as a poor person with nothing constructive to say and having no ideas was a representation of society's impatience with the less fortunate.

Dependence on the community was the theme I identified with regard to the coping strategies of Mkomani's artisanal fishing households. Coping strategies to combat the poverty faced by Mkomani's fishermen took place within all spheres of their environment: their households, their community and their livelihoods. Given their limited individual capacity all members of the focus groups claimed to receive financial and material assistance from relatives and friends during lean times. Reliance on the community was an important element in coping with poverty amongst the fishing household of Mkomani. Living insolation is usually frowned upon and it is common to find those in lower income brackets sharing strong communal bonds. Social networks were helpful in terms of providing information on where casual job vacancies were, but more importantly they were able to meet the essential and more immediate need of consumption in the form of borrowing of foodstuffs or money. Bonds between neighbours in poor communities often become stronger than those shared with relatives – especially those who may not share the same socio-economic status as the artisanal fisherman. As stated by the mother of the fishermen: "Even your own family, if they are able and you have nothing, they will despise you and throw you away...". The commonality of their (poverty) situation will inevitably elicit

some level of closeness. This may not always be the case however, as mentioned by the fishermen focus group who claimed that fishermen do not always get along well and many will opt to do things on their own. In any event social ties with one's neighbours, friends or relatives provide a wider resource pool from which the poor fisherman's household can receive assistance. Fatalism, an attitude where one accepts whatever they get each day in the belief that that was the provision intended by God for their day's needs, was a common last resort form of agency used by those who had nothing at all to eat in the household. As an outsider it may be impossible to comprehend but after listening to the participants in this study, this dawned on me as a really sad and horrible reality, which, even more sadly, some of my respondents seem to have come to terms with.

The lack of financial resources at the disposal of any Mkomani fisherman usually renders him unable to individually undertake any poverty-alleviating measure that requires a significant financial outlay, e.g. the purchase of suitable fishing gear to improve his catch. In addition, his household's vulnerability to external shocks and stresses, such as the absence of catch on any given day or the sudden illness of a household member ensure that the household is usually not in possession of any 'idle' money. Expenditures in such households almost always exceed income. This being the case it was a pleasant surprise during the course of this study to come across the members of the SSHFG based at the Kenyatta beach landing site. This group is a very good example of transformative collective agency. I have identified **Self-reliance** as the thematic concept that I feel can best represent the formation and relative success of this group. Tired with the repeated failure to receive government assistance to improve their fishing livelihood, the group got together, mobilized funds through member contributions and invested in commercial fishing assets. The desire to be dependent only on themselves was the sole motivation behind the formation of this group. The idea behind this investment was to improve the group's catch by being able to access more distant and more productive fishing grounds. These assets also played another major role: having a motorized vessel provided the very significant advantage of being able to access the sea far more regularly than fishermen with dug-out canoes. This meant that for the most part the stream of revenue earned by the fishermen was made relatively more regular. Closely related to the theme of self-reliance is the aspect (sub-theme) of cohesion within the group. Group membership is voluntary but brings with it the obligation to make regular financial contributions. This calls for an attitude of willingness to co-operate and adhere to this obligation amongst the fishermen. In addition to providing a regular livelihood to its 25 permanent members, the group also performs a crucial role with regard to social responsibility; it has a mentorship programme that seeks to take in jobless youth (or youth who are unable to proceed with their education) and trains them in fishing skills with the aim of having them become qualified fishermen in future. This function has implications for the sustainability of the group as it ensures the availability of fishing labour for the future. This development of human capital does go some way in reducing the vulnerability of the community. The group's collective agency allows for its self-reli-

ance through greater resource mobilization of financial and human resources. My interaction with this group did however bring to question the earlier remarks made by the fishermen focus group that fisherman are not generally willing to join one another in groups. The recognition given to the SSHFG through its success has increased its ability to alleviate poverty in the community as a result of the increased access to credit it now enjoys. The growth in total catch seems unending in the Indian Ocean, as in 2012 two new record highs were recorded for the Western (4.5 million tonnes) and Eastern (7.4 million tonnes) fishing areas. After three years (2007–09) in which total tuna catches in the Western Indian Ocean decreased by 30 percent as piracy deterred fishing operations, tuna catches have recovered since 2010 (FAO, 2014: 29). These facts would seem to support the assertions made by all the fishermen I talked to who claimed that all they needed was adequate fishing gear to enable them access the deeper waters where fish were plentiful.

It is the denial of one of the very freedoms prescribed by Sen's Capability approach that spurred the formation of the SSHFG; one of the group's major grievance was their recurring failure to receive any assistance whatsoever from the state fisheries department. This was the main motivating factor that led to the formation of the group. Each of the respective groups of participants had their own idea of what transformative development meant. For the mother and spouses of the fishermen this kind of development would entail their having a steady, guaranteed source of income. This would enable them mobilize capital through savings to allow them make investments. More importantly this type of development would allow for the element of self-determination in their lives. For the fishermen, acquiring suitable fishing gear which would ultimately increase their incomes and therefore provide them with money to invest was their idea of transformative development. The women fish traders felt that having sufficient finances to obtain the quantities of fish for their trade whenever they wished was what transformative development would mean in their lives. Further it would entail their being able to acquire the necessary storage facilities.

Conclusion

The sad reality is that for many of the artisanal fishing households in Mkomani poverty is a self-regenerating phenomenon which relentlessly ensnares each generation. Families have unfortunately been forced to accept this as a way of life. The vulnerabilities poor fishing households in Mkomani are exposed to are ever present and threatening. The meaning of poverty as presented by the study's participants were slightly varied, but basically similar: poverty meant deprivation and suffering due to acute and persistent financial deficiency. It meant increased vulnerability to shocks given their severely limited ability to cope with these shocks. The coping strategies used by the participants to deal with their poverty related to two main factors: social networks (for the provision of food or money) and the taking on of casual jobs to help smooth out household consumption during lean periods. While instances of collective agency in this study were not frequently evident, the one case where such agency did exist was indeed very inspiring. The SSHFG had shown what was possible with unity amongst fishermen. The fruits of the collaboration of the group's 25 fishermen had been the acquisition of fishing assets which had helped make the fishermen's incomes considerably more regular, and on many days higher.

While their surrounding socio-economic environment is constantly changing, their poverty does not. It may very well be the case that government policy is unable to keep pace with this dynamism of poverty experienced by the fishing community; the fishing community however can and does. Emphasis must be given to the *active* participation of communities in decision-making. Indeed this idea is not at all new. So how should things be different? Channels of communication between the communities and arms of government must be revitalized and strengthened. Focus must be given to means of enhancing community agency in their fight against poverty. Instilling and regularly reiterating the fact that the community owns the fisheries resource and therefore needs to be its custodians for the sake of their survival and posterity must be taken a step further; this may mean targeting the young and possibly the jobless within the community for education in natural resource-management. Increasing the capabilities of the fishermen (community) through participation and empowerment is also essential if poverty amongst the fishermen is to be alleviated.

While the use of illegal fishing gear (such as Spear guns, Monofilament gillnets and Beach seines) has been noted within the Mkomani area, the authorities need to be cognisant that this occurrence is merely a symptom of the underlying hardship being faced by the fishermen; the likelihood of such destructive gear-use continuing is correlated with the availability of vessels and gear that would enable the fishermen access deeper waters. Emphasis should be placed on the underlying factors and not merely on the symptoms. Structural solutions need to be sought.

There is need for the effectiveness of the BMU to be re-assessed. As the mouthpiece for the fisherman there must be focus on eliminating instances of elite capture in these institutions. The Kenyan government has definitely made efforts to improve the lot of the artisanal fisherman, though arguably with varying degrees of success. However, the onus lies largely on the government to regularly assess their status and reformulate fisheries regulations and policy when and where needed; it has to re-strategize in light of past developments and the present (but constantly evolving) scenario. Regulatory frameworks in the sector have to keep pace with the dynamics therein. One way I believe this can be achieved is by ensuring the continued inclusion of the fisherman in the formulation, implementation and perhaps even enforcement of these regulations. While there have been significant strides in this direction there still is need for timely and relevant regulatory adaptation. The fisherman has for a long time felt alienated from the government. Increasingly integrating him into the management of fisheries resources I feel would restore his faith in government.

Despite the obvious advantages accruing to the members of the SSHFG as a result of their collective effort, a significant number of fishermen in Mkomani still remain without membership to any such grouping. This fact I feel warrants further investigation: what factors determine collective agency? Why did some fishermen in Mkomani not wish to enroll themselves into the SSHFG? Such research might provide answers to the question of how to embed collective agency into the fabric of the artisanal fisherman and the community mindset. In addition, research efforts need to be directed at the issue of capability expansion in artisanal fishing communities.

The artisanal fishing community in Mkomani on its part should focus on what *it* can do for itself. This calls for cohesion amongst this group and a common desire to develop. There is power in collaboration (as clearly shown by the SSHFG). The sources of community disharmony and reluctance to cooperate within one another need to be identified and rooted out. It is my belief that many of the answers to the poverty experienced by Mkomani's artisanal fisherman lie with the community. I see the solutions to their poverty (and in poverty affecting other fishing communities) as requiring a collaborative effort between the community and the state. This symbiotic relationship would entail the community providing local knowledge on what they consider as the cause(s) of their poverty, as well as the resolve and manpower to address the problem. The state in turn would provide infrastructure, social services, financial resources, as well as the commitment to alleviating the hardship faced by the community.*Together we stand*.....

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APPENDIX 1

Descriptive labels and quotations used to develop initial codes

Research Question 1: Meaning of poverty

RESPONSE	CODE
<i>Focus group – Women fish traders</i>	
Lack of capital to do business	Insufficient financial resources
Lack of alternative employment	No gainful employment available
Taking loans is too risky	Risk aversion
<i>Focus group – Mother/Spouses of fishermen</i>	
“Today we eat, tomorrow we lack”	Food insecurity
Poor condition of our house	Poor shelter
Don’t know where we will get food for our children	Helplessness/Food insecurity
Unable to pay for drugs	Insufficient financial resources
No guaranteed/regular source of money	Insufficient financial resources
Children are always crying for food	Food insecurity/Hunger
No idea what we’ll eat at lunch time	Food insecurity
“What kind of life is this?”	Despair (due to insufficient money)
“Money follows money”	Insufficient financial resources
“How could she marry someone like him?”	Despise
No one listens to the poor	Voiceless (never taken seriously, ignored)
<i>Focus group – Fishermen</i>	
No job/work	Unemployment
No fishing equipment	No tools
No assistance	Abandonment
Fed with false promises; misused	Demoralised/ have lost hope
No financial support	Abandonment
We are despised, regarded as hopeless	Despise
Oppressed by developers	Ignored/Disregarded
No financial ability	Insufficient financial resources
Sometimes get a little food only enough for the children	Hunger
<i>Key Informant – Abdallah Athmani</i>	
Poor earnings resources	Low income=Insufficient financial
Life of very low standard	Low standard of living
“Fishing as a profession is not poor: it is the way our fishermen undertake it that is poor”	Poor fishing gear used
<i>Key Informant – Ali Abdallah Amri</i>	
No livelihood] No gainful employment Ignored /Abandonment
“If we request vessels/engines we do not receive them”	
“To say the truth my brother, we small-scale fishermen the government does not assist us; they do not bother with our problems at all”	

Key Informant – Jaffer Kimonge

Cannot plan future/life	No prospects=Stagnation=Demoralizing
Unable to afford cost of living in Mombasa	Insufficient financial resources
Unable to deal with everyday issues (e.g. illness)	Insufficient financial resources

Key Informant – Yusuf Mideche

Limited financial resources	Insufficient income
Our consumption (e.g boat fuel exceeds our earnings)	Insufficient income

Key Informant – Mrs. Mwaka Barabara

Daily struggle to get basic needs	Daily struggle
Lack of appropriate fishing inputs – rely on Traditional gear	No tools
Livelihood (=life) characterized by chance	Income insecurity (Living with risk)

Research Question 2: Coping strategies (agency) used

Focus group – Women fish traders

Cleaning people’s homes/clothes] Seek paid domestic labour Social networks Small-scale business
Borrow food, cash from friends/neighbours	
Obtain fish on credit from fishermen	
Making and selling fruit juice	

Focus group – Mother/Spouses of fishermen

Using available foodstuffs to prepare meals	Always carefully planning each meal (excluding certain ingredients)
Buying cheapest/smallest quantities	Careful budgeting and expenditure
Appealing to the higher power	Prayer
Adopting a fatalist attitude	Perseverance

Focus group – Fishermen

Seeking alternative employment] Casual jobs Social networks
Borrowing (food, money) from friends/relations	
Relying on friends to connect them with jobs	

Key Informant – Abdallah Athmani

Go fishing twice a day	Increased fishing effort
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Key Informant – Jaffer Kimonge

Rely on our fellow fishermen or relatives (e.g. for fish, financial help)	Social networks
Seek alternative sources of income	Casual jobs

Key Informant – Yusuf Mideche

Reduce amount of earnings saved or used to purchase fuel Budget reallocation

Key Informant – Mrs. Mwaka Barabara

Borrowing from fish dealer to finance house-hold expenditure Social networks

Research Question 3: Collective agency resulting in Transformative development?

Focus group – Women fish traders Revolving fund (short-lived)

Focus group – Mother/Wives of fishermen No capacity

Focus group – Fishermen Expenditure exceeds income = No capacity
Do not get along with one another = Disunity

Key Informant – Abdallah Athmani No capacity

Key Informant – Jaffer Kimonge No capacity

Key Informant – Yusuf Mideche [SSHFG] *Member contributions
Mentorship
Assets acquired
Motivated by desire for self-reliance
Principle: equality of all

Key Informant – Mrs. Mwaka Barabara

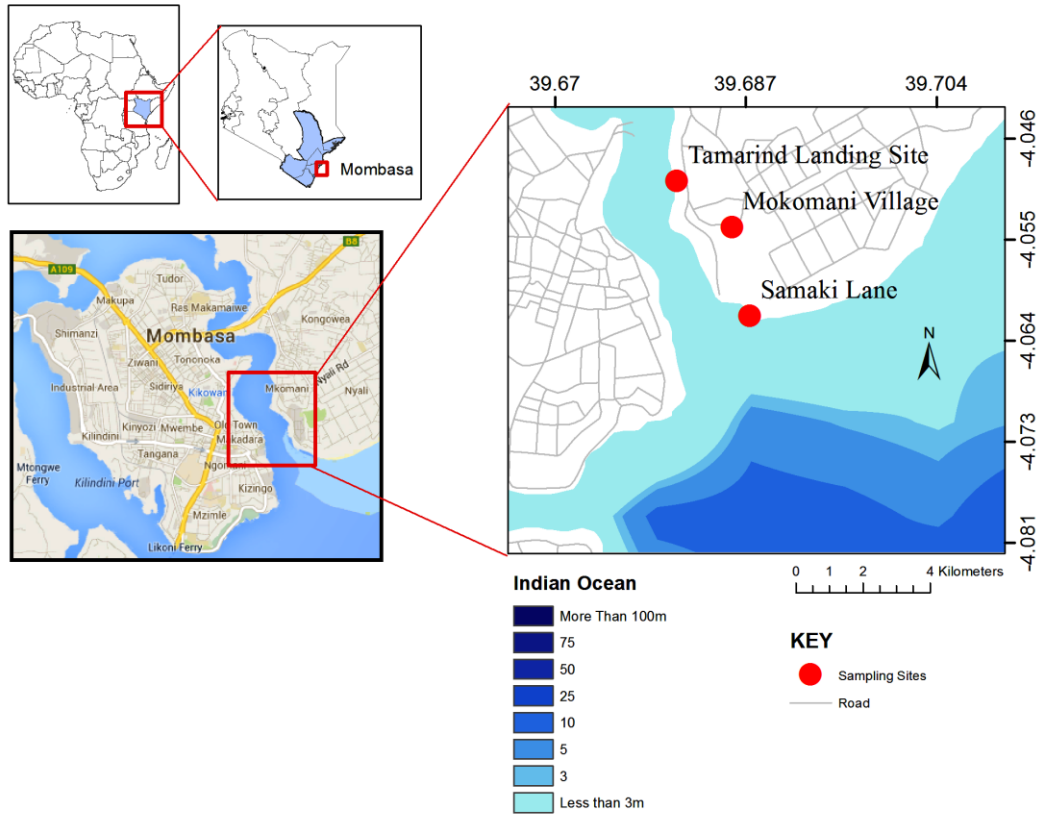
BMU Locally generated revenue used in development
KCDP Development fund Loans

* Only one site in the study was identified as exemplifying transformative collective agency: the Subira Self-Help Fishermen’s Group (SSHFG) operating from the Kenyatta Beach (Samaki Lane) landing site

Appendix II

Map of the study area

SURVEY SAMPLING SITES- MKOMANI, MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA



Source: Noah Ng'siange - KMFRI ICT department

Appendices III-V Fieldwork photographs [Source: Edward Waiyaki]

Appendix III – Participants in the study



Figure 2: Interview with Abdalla Amri at Kenyatta Beach landing site



Figure 3: Interview with Adballa Athmani in Mkomani



Figure 4: Interview with Jaffer Kimonge at Tamarind landing site



Figure 5: Focus group with Mkomani fishermen



Figure 6: Focus group discussion with the mother (gesturing) and spouses of three fishermen at their home



Figure 7: Focus group with women fish traders (Note buckets for transporting fish from the beach to place of preparation)

Appendix IV

Poverty of artisanal fishing households in Mkomani



Figure 8: Mud-walled artisanal fisherman's house. Note adjacent concrete wall (to the right) indicating on-going (encroaching) development



Figure 9: Deplorable state of one fisherman's house



Figure 10: Worn out fishermen's net



Figure 11: Damaged footwear used by foot-fisherman at sea (exposes fisherman to dangerous urchins or stonefish)



Figure 12: Mkomani artisanal fishermen go fishing using a non-motorized dug-out canoe

Appendix V

Kenyatta Beach (Samaki Lane) landing site – an exemplary case of transformative collective agency!



Fig 12: Member-financed Kenyatta Beach fish banda (home to Subira Self-Help Fishermen Group-SSHFG)



Fig 13: Motorized fibre-glass fishing boat acquired by SSHFG through collective savings



Fig 14: Yusuf (Chief fisherman) fixing fishing nets before leaving for a fishing trip



Fig 15: 15 horse-power SSHFG boat engine cleaned before a fishing trip



Fig 16: SSHFG stores its fishing gear in the banda