

Challenges of the Rural Youth in Fishery Activities in the Zambezi Region, Namibia

Dr Nico Sisinyize

Department of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Faculty of Commerce, Human Sciences and Education

ABSTRACT: *The fisheries sector plays a vital role in global food security and economic development, with a substantial portion of the world's population depending on it for their livelihoods. In rural areas, particularly in developing countries, youth engagement in fishery activities is essential for sustaining this sector. However, rural youth involved in fishery activities encounter a multitude of challenges that hinder their participation and success in the industry. This abstract sheds light on the key challenges faced by rural youth engaged in fishery activities in the Zambezi region, Namibia and underscores the importance of addressing these issues to ensure the sustainability of this critical sector. The study had a total size sample of 36 respondents including Focus Group Discussions comprising of rural youth in fishery activities sampled using purposive and snow-ball sampling. A qualitative research approach was adopted. The study revealed that rural youth in fishery activities are faced with various challenges. These challenges encompass multiple dimensions, including access to resources, education, market opportunities, information, participation in policy deliberations, and environmental sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves providing access to resources, education, training, and support networks, as well as creating an enabling policy environment that recognizes the importance of rural youth in sustaining and growing the fishery sector in rural areas.*

KEYWORDS: *rural youth, fishery activities, poverty alleviation and rural livelihoods.*

Date of Submission: 05-10-2023

Date of Acceptance: 18-10-2023

I. INTRODUCTION

Namibia like other countries of world, has one of the most productive fishing grounds in the world (FAO 2007; Lange 2003:3), with the potential for sustainable yields of up to over 1.5 million metric tonnes (MET 2010:11; NPC 2004). The Namibian fishing sector is divided into four subsections, indicating; marine capture fisheries, inland capture fisheries, marine aquaculture, and inland aquaculture (FAO 2007; Russell & Wolf 2012). Inland freshwater fisheries are important in less arid areas such as the Zambezi and Kavango regions in the North-East of the country. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (2001) acknowledges that Namibia's perennial rivers provide over 1 million hectares of floodplain wetlands with fisheries potential, varying by season to between 6-8,000 tonnes per annum. 50% of the rural population lives in the northern regions and derive food, income, and informal employment from inland fish resources (Batty & Tjipute 2005).

The role of fisheries in rural livelihoods specifically for the rural communities in Namibia cannot be overemphasized. In the Zambezi Region, fisheries precisely small scale fishery is essential for livelihood improvement and poverty alleviation for the majority of the people in the region (Purvis 2001). The trade-in fish products are especially important to the rural communities with limited means of Income Generation Activities. Fishery products in the Zambezi Region are also important for the exchange of other essential commodities (Næsje, Hay, Purvis, Hamukuaya, Kapirika & Abbott 2002:3).

The concept small scale fishery is used to describe fishers either self-employed single operators, informal micro-enterprises, or formal sector businesses (Coates 2002; Tieze 2016), fishers lacking fishing technology, whilst using manual fishing devices, usually obtain/not obtain fishing permits from authorities (Staples, Satia & Gardiner 2004). Rural youth are often reflected in these characteristics. However, there is unrealized potential for decent and meaningful livelihoods for rural youth in small-scale fisheries in the Zambezi region. This finding is especially important as youth are increasingly engaged in non-standard, informal and less secure opportunities, and as youth unemployment rises.

Despite Namibia's commitment and establishment of institutions to address sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation through fishery activities in rural areas, rural youth poverty continues to increase specifically in the Zambezi Region, which places a greater risk to the region's rural youth sustainable livelihood and rural development. The fishery segment call for improvement to provide for rural communities including the rural youth population growth of the region concerning improving their livelihood and alleviating poverty.

Empowered and innovative youth are essential to the future of small-scale fisheries. Thus, it is crucial to understand how youth can engage with the sector to access decent and meaningful livelihood opportunities.

The body of knowledge on rural youth in small scale fishery is limited and does not demonstrate the challenges faced by the rural youth in this sector specifically in the Zambezi Region. However, successful engagement of youth in small scale fishery requires that policies, investments and other interventions be informed by an understanding of the livelihood opportunities and challenges faced by youth.

Rural youth are not involved in fishery policy dialogues and often excluded in decision-making. They are underrepresented in community development structures governing fishery activities in rural areas. This implies that their concerns are not captured. Most national fishery policies do not address the concerns encountered by rural young individuals and thus remain unattended. For instance, Namibia's Inland Fisheries Resources Act No. 1 of 2003, (Government of Namibia, 2003), which also regulates small scale fisheries in Namibia, excludes the inclusion of rural youth members on the establishment of the Inland Fisheries Council as representatives of young men and women in the fishery sector.

Awareness of rural youth in fishery activities lacks in the Zambezi Region. The region has institutions responsible for rural youth in fishery activities such as the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Fishery Committees in rural areas of the Zambezi region, Village Development Committees, Traditional Authorities and sub traditional courts all these conducted little in providing sufficient information and support towards rural youth in fishery activities in the Zambezi Region.

The study's conclusion was that in order to contribute to regional and national development, rural youth participation in fishery activities will create employment, generate income, improve the livelihood and alleviate poverty amongst the rural youth in the Zambezi Region.

Objectives of the study

The study was to achieve the following objectives;

- To explore problems that impede rural youth in fishery activities in the Zambezi Region
- To provide recommendations to effect policy changes to engage rural youth in fishery activities in order to alleviate poverty among the rural youth in Namibia

II. METHODOLOGY

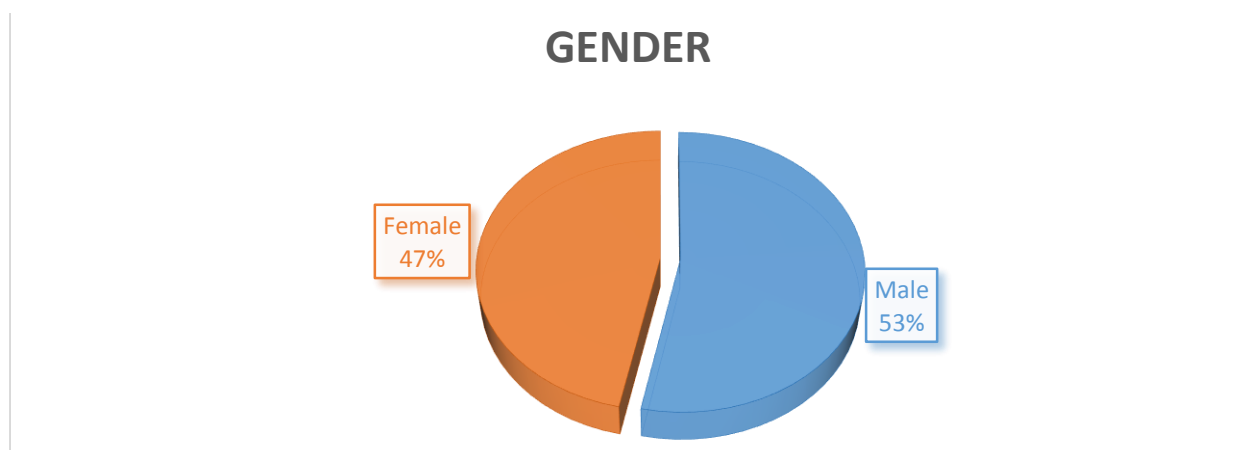
The study adopted a qualitative research approach to appropriately address the purpose of the study. Interview schedules were designed, conducted and used as data collection instruments. The subjective views and experiences of rural youth engaged in fishery activities were perceived as vital in determining the challenges experienced by the rural youth in fishery activities. The target group for this study was comprised of rural youth in fishery activities in rural areas of the Zambezi region. These were selected using the purposive, and snow ball samples. The total size sample consisted of 36 respondents including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) from six constituencies of the Zambezi region, namely; Katima Rural, Kabbe North, Kongola, Judea Lyaboloma, Linyanti and Sibbida Constituencies. Data collected from interviews were transcribed, coded, analysed, interpreted and verified. After the analysis, data was categorised and organised into themes.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier, this study explored the challenges that impede rural youth in fishery livelihood activities.

Profile of the respondents

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the respondents according to gender in fishery livelihood activities as indicated;



In fishery livelihood activities, the study had 30 respondents. 16 of the total respondents' representing 53% as depicted in the figure comprising males. Whereas, the remaining 14 of the respondents, representing 47% were female. Male respondents dominated the study. The research observed that more female respondents were not established during the study since they had to travel to town to access the market, whilst males remained in rural areas doing fishery activities.

Table 1: Marital status of the respondents in fishery activities

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Married	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Divorced	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
	Single	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The study discovered that from the total 30 respondents in fishery livelihood activities, 18 of the respondents representing 60.0% indicated that they are married. Whereas, 3 of the respondents, representing 10.0% said they were divorced and 9 respondents representing 30.0% indicated they are single. The study targeted all respondents, regardless of their marital status.

Table 2: Age range of the respondents in fishery activities

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	18-20	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	21-25	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	26-35	25	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

As indicated in the table above, only one of the respondents from the total 30 was aged between 18-20 years, representing 3.3%. The attributing factor is that the youth at this age, are mostly still dependent on their parents and families. Meanwhile, 4 respondents were established to be aged 21-25 representing 13.3% and a majority of 25 respondents were established to be aged between 26-35 years representing 83.3%.

Table 3: Level of education of the respondents in fishery livelihood activities

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Secondary school	17	56.7	56.7	56.7
	Primary school	12	40.0	40.0	96.7
	University/College	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The study discovered that 17 of the total 30 respondents representing 56.7%, were established to be at the secondary school level. Whereas, 12 of the respondents representing 40.0% indicated that they have a primary school level. Also, only one of the total respondents of 3.3% has indicated to have attended a university education.

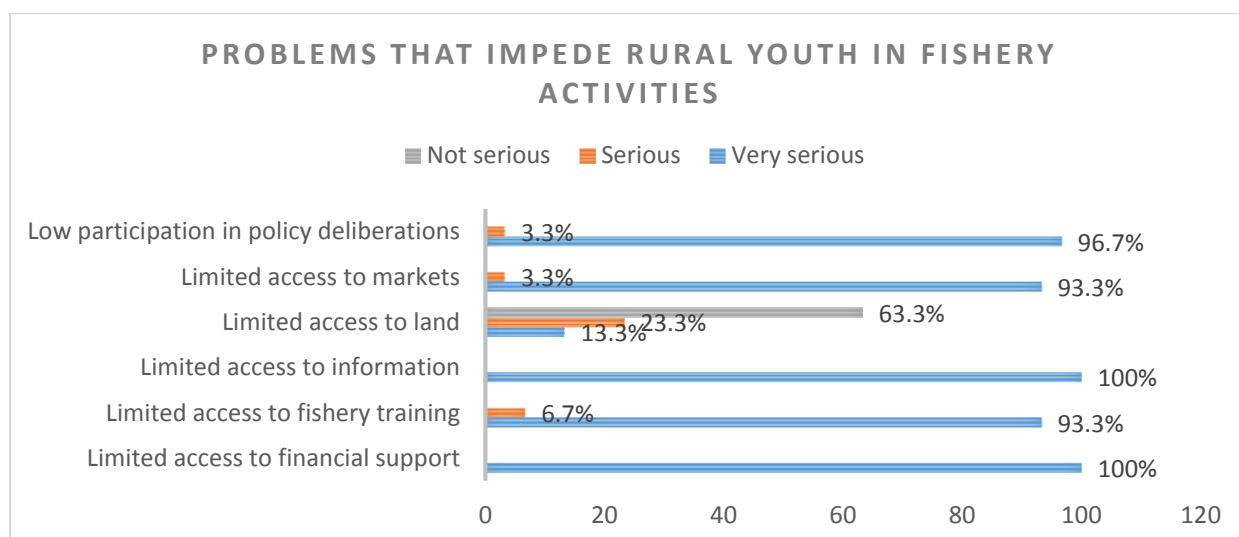
Table 4: Occupation of the respondents in fishery activities

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Unemployed	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents were requested to indicate their occupation concerning whether employed, unemployed, or others to specify. According to the findings as depicted in table 4 above, all respondents were established to be unemployed, representing 100% of the total respondents. They cited a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas as the main contributing factor.

Figure 2 illustrates the problems impeding rural youth in fishery livelihood activities in the Zambezi Region. Respondents were provided options for problems to indicate whether serious, severe, and not serious.

Figure 2: Problems impeding rural youth in fishery activities



About limited access to financial support, 100% of the respondents indicated that they do not have access to financial support in fishery activities. Respondents explained that there is no financial support for youth engaged in fishery activities. This is attributed to that they have not heard any financial assistance of fund schemes for youth in fisheries, neither have they been consulted the possibility of introducing such an assistance scheme. All respondents maintained that they depend on their families, sometimes from friends, and from the little profit generated to sustain their fishery activities. Respondents also claimed that they do not own assets to serve as collateral to seek financial assistance and they believe that even if they have assets, most financial institutions would not accommodate them because of their unemployment status. Most financial institutions are profit-making and would want their beneficiaries to render contributions or means of paying back and fishery activities are an unreliable livelihood source. Providing financial services in rural areas is typically considered

high-risk attributable to the unique characteristics of livelihoods of being dependent on natural resources, in most cases seasonal, long production cycles, and vulnerability to weather (the International Fund for Agricultural Development 2014:2; FAO, CTA & IFAD 2014).

Regarding limited access to fishery training, the study established that 93.3% of the total respondents indicated that they have not received any training in fishery-related areas. According to the respondents, there is no tailor-made training specifically met for rural youth in fishery activities in the Zambezi Region. Rural youth participating in fishery activities relies on knowledge acquired from parents and other family members. Pacific Agricultural and Forestry Policy Network (2012) expressed similar observations that knowledge about rural livelihood activities is often transmitted through traditional methods such as from elders to the youth. Whereas, 6.7% of the total respondents claimed that they have received training in fisheries. A respondent stated that he received formal training at a higher Institute of Fisheries, where he graduated with a certificate in fisheries. The other respondent also claimed that he has received training in fishery management offered by the MFMR, the training targeted members of fishery projects.

About limited access to fishery information, the study discovered that 100% of the respondents stated they do not have access to fishery information. Respondents claimed that there are no specific youth information-sharing meetings specifically for the youth in fishery activities that are either arranged by any institutions responsible either for youth matters or fishery activities in general. The study also established that it suggests no communication between the respondents in fishery activities and institutions responsible for addressing youth concerns. The study established that only interested respondents attend community meetings on fisheries, where respondents claim these platforms are dominated by elders who decide on their behalf. Traditional authorities usually arrange these general meetings. In this, respondents claim that most topics on agendas are mainly foreign fishers, size of fishnets, and closure of fishing activities, not necessarily concerns of the youth in fishery activities. The study also discovered there are no rural development centres in the Zambezi Region that could at least house information related to fishery activities where rural youth could also benefit. There are libraries in certain administrative centres, especially in education circuits, but these centres do not have information about fisheries and other livelihood activities.

Access to land in the Zambezi Region was established to be not a severe problem amongst the respondents in fishery activities. 63.3% of the respondents indicated that they do their fishery activities anywhere they feel like. They explained that they normally put temporal building structures easy to move if fish stocks become limited, they shift to other places. The respondents also claimed that they have not been confronted with overfishing areas. Meanwhile, 23.3% of the total respondents argued that there are times when they are asked authorisation of fishing in certain areas. In this, they are counseled to get consent from traditional authorities to grant them admittance. 13.3% of the respondents claim they were chased several times from fishing illegally in people's areas and have attempted to obtain consent but no approval from proprietors was granted. Consequently, they changed to other areas. As one respondent said;

“My fishing nets were impounded by the landlord, that I was not permitted to do fishing in his area, so I approached the local traditional authority and I was once given a warning that in future, I should first report to them so that pension can be granted.”

The study also discovered 93.3% of the total respondents do not have access to the market. Access to the market requires them to travel to town to exhibit their fishery products. Respondents also narrated that they generate little profit attributable to high transport costs to the town, where they are charged between N\$15-20 per cooler box. One respondent indicated that;

“If I have a large cooler box, I pay N\$ 30 per cooler and the small box at N\$20 per cooler box. Here there is no market and you will also not generate enough profit because individuals here do not have enough money”.

As observed by Carney (1999) that exposure to markets in urban centres is crucial for profit-making and business growth. Also, whilst in town, certain fish stocks get spoiled attributable to competition, as there are more individuals selling fish products. Respondents in fishery projects expressed that they have a market for their fish stocks in their communities and local lodges, but the process of accessing the fish stocks is long and often requires individuals to travel to town to apply for permits at the MFMR, which takes several months for approval. Other respondents were concerned that though there are into fishery projects, the decision of what and when to harvest the fish stocks, still depends on the MFMR. Project members take no decision, and this has led to high dropouts of project members. One respondent expounded that;

“We were approached by local lodges to enter into agreements with them that they order fish from us per month, but we informed them that we still have to consult the MFMR for approval. This took several weeks and no approval was granted up until now. The MFMR replied at a later stage that fish stocks cannot be harvested since there were not ready”.

Respondents were also requested to indicate their level of participation in fishery policy deliberations. The study established that 96.7% of the total respondents do not participate in fishery policy deliberations. Respondents

detailed that they do not even know whether policies in place addresses rural youth in fishery activities. Most respondents explained that they are not invited to these deliberations, they do not know anything regarding policies related to fishery activities. One respondent said;

“We normally hear on a local radio station that the following month, fishing activities will be closed, without our views incorporated in this decision or hear from us. No youth meetings are specific to fishery activities or any contribution in policy deliberations”.

The study discovered there are general community meetings organised by traditional authorities, fishery committees with the MFMR about fishery activities, but these meetings are not youth specifically. Consequently, elders dominate in deliberations, and youth concerns are not incorporated in possible resolutions.

Recommendations to effect policy changes to engage rural youth in fishery activities in order to alleviate poverty among the rural youth in Namibia

Access to information was one of the pressing issues impeding rural youth participating in fishery activities. In this, respondents advised that institutions responsible for fishery activities should conduct educational awareness campaigns on fishery activities in rural areas specifically targeting the youth such as holding rural youth meetings and discussions in rural areas on the sustainable use of fishery resources.

Respondents' also suggested establishing rural youth groups in fishery activities in various areas. They suggested that any specific information regarding fisheries targeting the youth should be communicated through these groups, which should work in collaboration with local traditional authorities and fishery committees.

Youth training in fishery activities was also identified, where respondents proposed that tailor-made training be developed specifically for rural youth in this sector, such as on harvesting, types of fishing, and the legal framework attached to fisheries.

Relevant authorities such as the MFMR and local traditional authorities should investigate the possibility of constructing and improving storage facilities, equipped with cooling systems for keeping fish stocks.

Respondents also submitted that there are fishery projects established for rural youth, but these projects are unable to succeed attributable to material and equipment assistance. Respondents recommended that these projects be identified by the MFMR to ensure necessary support can be provided for these projects.

Respondents were also with the view that traditional authorities also had critical functions, ensuring rural youth participation in fishery activities. Traditional authorities should ensure that rural youth in fishery activities are also represented on fishery committees. Respondents sense this move should be made compulsory for all fishery committees to have a youth presentation on their structures. Also, the responsibility of land allocation for fishery-related projects, respondents believe traditional authorities have strong powers in land allocation and called for traditional authorities to identify and allocate land specifically for this purpose.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, addressing the challenges faced by rural youth in fisheries is essential not only for their economic well-being but also for the sustainability of fishery resources and the overall development of rural areas. A coordinated effort involving governments, NGOs, private sector actors, and local communities is necessary to create an environment where rural youth can thrive in the fishery sector and contribute to food security and economic growth in rural regions.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Batty, M & Tjipute, M. 2005. Overview and Analysis of Social, Economic, and Fisheries Information to Promote Artisanal Fisheries Management in the BCLME Region, Namibia. Windhoek: University of Namibia.
- [2]. Coates, D. 2002. Inland capture fishery statistics in Southeast Asia: current status and information needs. Thailand. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and Pacific Bangkok.
- [3]. Carney, D. 1999. Livelihood approaches compared: A brief comparison of the livelihoods approaches of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), CARE, Oxfam, and the UNDP. A brief review of the fundamental principles behind the sustainable livelihood approach of donor agencies. In Livelihoods connect. London: DFID.
- [4]. Coates, D. 2002. Inland capture fishery statistics in Southeast Asia: current status and information needs. Thailand. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and Pacific Bangkok.
- [5]. Colpaert, A. Matengu, K & Polojärvi, K. 2013. Land use practices in Caprivi's changing political environment. Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences 2(2): 2026-7215.
- [6]. FAO. 2007. Education for rural people and food security: a cross-country analysis. Rome. FAO.
- [7]. FAO. 2007. Fisheries areas and Marine Resources. Rome: FAO.
- [8]. FAO. CTA & IFAD. 2014. Youth in Agriculture: Challenges and concrete solutions. FAO.
- [9]. International Fund for Agricultural Development). 2014. "IFAD's Engagement in Middle-income Countries. Evaluation Synthesis." IFAD. Rome. https://www.ifad.org/evaluation/reports/evaluation_synthesis/tags/mics/y2014/9973915WorldCat. Accessed, July, 2017.
- [10]. Lange, G, M. 2003. The value of Namibia's commercial fisheries. Windhoek: Directorate of Environmental Affairs.
- [11]. Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. 2001. Towards Responsible Development of Aquaculture. Namibia's Aquaculture Policy. Windhoek: MFMR.

- [12]. National Planning Commission. 2004. Namibia Vision 2030: Policy Framework for Long Term National Development: Windhoek: NPC.
- [13]. Russell, R, D & Wolf, D. 2012. Occupational Mapping Namibian Fishing and Maritime Industry: Commercial Fishing Industry & Ports and Harbours. Windhoek: TEN (Pty) Ltd.
- [14]. Næsje, H. Hay, C. Purvis, J, Hamukuaya, H. Kapirika, S & Abbott, J. 2002. Shared Resource Management on the Zambezi/ Chobe Systems in Northeast Namibia: Report of fish river survey and collection of information from the fish market, Including Survey Manuals and Forms. Trondheim: Foundation for the Nature Research and Cultural Heritage Research.
- [15]. Staples D, Satia, B & Gardiner P, R. 2004. A research agenda for small-scale fisheries. Bangkok: FAO.
- [16]. Tietze, U. 2016. Technical and Socio-economic characteristics of Small-Scale coastal fishing communities and opportunities for poverty alleviation and empowerment. Rome: FAO.

Nico L Sisinyize "Challenges of the rural youth in fishery activities in the Zambezi region, Namibia" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 12, no. 10, 2023, pp. 55-61. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722