



Meeting Report on Understanding the Current Status of BMU's in Bagamoyo District, Tanzania

Meeting Date: 19th June 2025
Venue: Bagamoyo District

Background and Objectives

The Sustainable Futures Initiative (SFI), in collaboration with the Bagamoyo District Fisheries Offices, convened a consultative engagement with three Beach Management Units (BMUs) – Kaole, Kisutu, and Dunda – to assess their organizational status, operational capacity, challenges, and development needs. These BMUs represent a critical front line in community-led conservation and fisheries management along Tanzania's Indian Ocean coast.

Objectives of the meeting included:

- **Assessing the registration and legal compliance of the BMUs.**
- **Understanding their implementation status of the National BMU Guidelines.**
- **Identifying institutional and capacity gaps.**
- **Documenting challenges, ongoing practices, and development needs.**
- **Exploring priority areas for technical and financial support.**



2. Legal Status and Governance Structures

All three BMUs reported being formally registered and operating with endorsed constitutions. However, due to recent leadership changes through elections, the current office bearers have not yet initiated constitutional reviews or amendments.

- **Leadership capacity:**

Leaders from each BMU were recently elected and expressed the need for induction training to understand BMU governance principles and roles as outlined in the National Guidelines.

- **Action Planning & Budgeting:**

Dunda BMU has a current action plan guiding their activities.

Kaole BMU has an annual budget in place but reported funding limitations hampering its execution.

Kisutu BMU lacks both an action plan and a functional budget, underscoring the need for strategic support.



3. Compliance with the National BMU Operational Guidelines

Despite being aware of the National Guidelines for BMUs, most leaders had not read the document and lacked familiarity with its contents. They expressed a strong desire for training on interpreting and operationalizing the guidelines.

On recalling the eight core BMU responsibilities, few leaders could mention more than three, although they recognized the overarching mandate to conserve ocean resources.

This finding signals the need to organize targeted awareness-building sessions covering:

- Legal frameworks (including Fisheries Act No. 22 of 2003)
- BMU roles and duties
- Monitoring and enforcement
- Collaborative Fisheries management Area (CFMA)
- Gender and inclusion in BMU operations



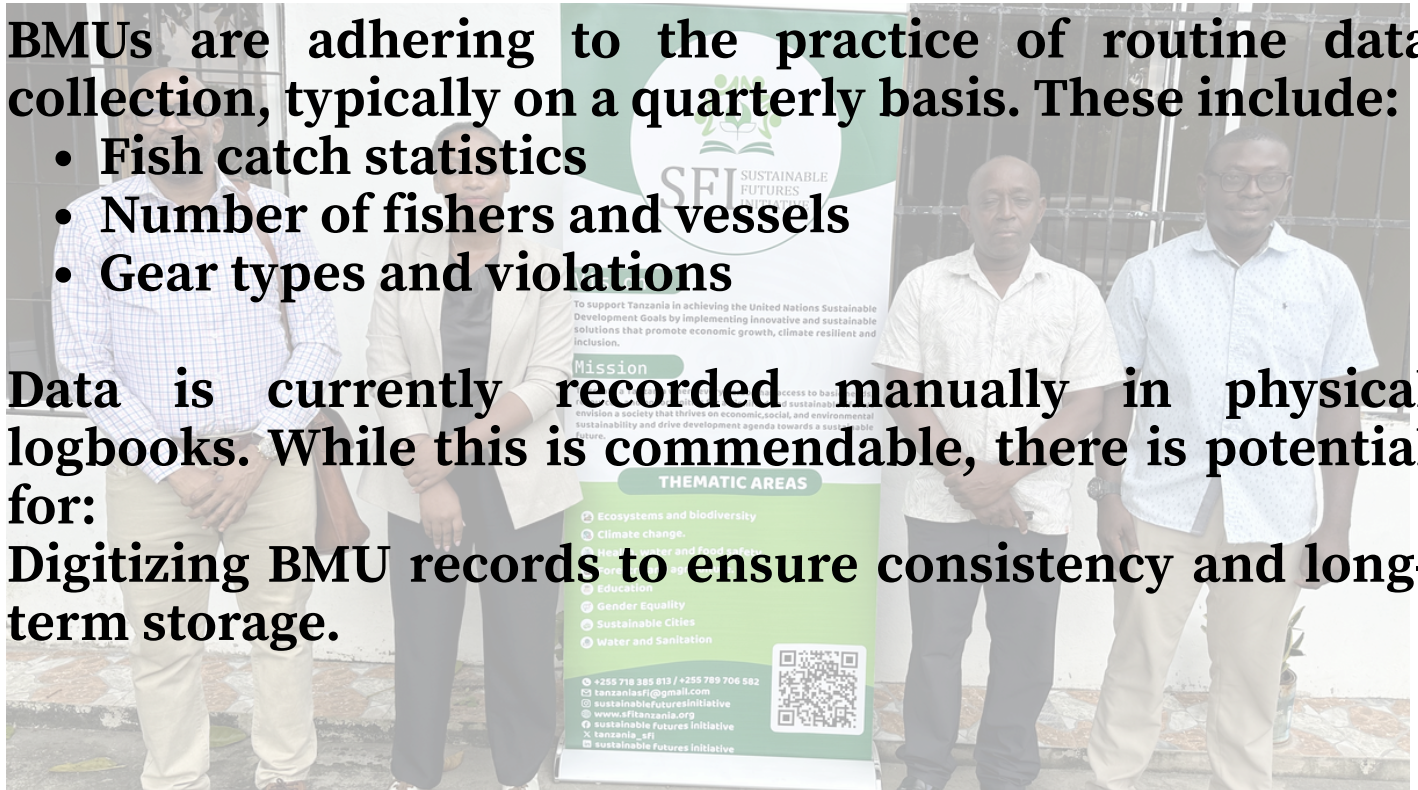
4. Data Collection and Record-Keeping Practices

BMUs are adhering to the practice of routine data collection, typically on a quarterly basis. These include:

- Fish catch statistics
- Number of fishers and vessels
- Gear types and violations

Data is currently recorded manually in physical logbooks. While this is commendable, there is potential for:

Digitizing BMU records to ensure consistency and long-term storage.



5. By-Law Development and Local Enforcement

All BMUs confirmed having developed localized bylaws in line with their marine contexts:

Kisutu: Bylaws focus on mangrove conservation, prohibition of firewood and charcoal harvesting, and destruction of illegal fishing nets.

Kaole: Emphasises seaweed and sea cucumber protection and banning destructive gear like beach seines.

Dunda: Proactively enforces bans on small-mesh nets and participates in joint patrols using a boat provided by the District Council.

These bylaws are community-enforced, but they require harmonisation and approval from the district.

6. Income Sources and Financial Sustainability

BMUs reported diverse but limited sources of revenue:

- **Kaole:** Sea cucumber farming and aquaculture.
- **Kisutu:** Membership contributions and entry fees.
- **Dunda:** License fees, fines, and fishery revenue collections.

These revenues are insufficient to support full operations, highlighting the importance of:

- **Introducing value chain enhancement (e.g., seaweed drying and packaging)**
- **Creating community revolving funds**
- **Securing grant support for sustainable income streams**

7. CFMA Status and Opportunities

Bagamoyo District once had three Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs). These structures were dissolved due to the continuing election but are expected to be reconstituted post-BMU elections.

BMUs expressed interest in rejoining or forming new CFMA clusters with neighbouring communities to improve surveillance, resource protection, and conflict mitigation.

8. Challenges Faced by BMUs

The meeting revealed several persistent challenges

- **Lack of financial incentives (all roles are voluntary)**
- **Limited patrol equipment (e.g., no dedicated boats or fuel,)**
- **Inadequate protective gear (raincoats, gumboots, torches)**
- **Mobility issues across vast coastal zones**
- **Information and skills gaps in fisheries law, environmental management, and governance**

BMUs requested training, gear support, mobility resources, and community awareness programs to improve their impact.

9. Conservation Practices: Reef Closures

BMUs reported implementing temporary reef closures (locally referred to as kufunga miamba) for 2–3 months to allow fish stock regeneration.

10. Community-Driven Project Priorities

BMUs shared their priority interventions for external support:

Kaole BMU -

- **Strengthening sea cucumber farming (equipment and value addition)**
- **Revitalizing seaweed farming**
- **Linking with domestic and export markets**

Kisutu BMU

Expansion of seaweed farming

Mangrove restoration projects

Dunda BMU

- **Seaweed cultivation in deeper waters due to degradation in shallow zones**
- **Capacity-building for monitoring and enforcement**

All BMU requested for training on patrol techniques, fishing guidelines, environmental laws, and surveillance documentation.



11. Conclusion and Recommendations

This meeting provided critical insights into the operational reality of BMUs and the challenges they face in enforcing sustainable fisheries management. The following key recommendations emerged:

- **Train BMU leaders on their core roles, fisheries laws, bylaw formulation, and the national BMU guidelines.**
- **Provide essential patrol equipment (boats, gear, fuel) and support official approval of BMU bylaws.**
- **Shift from manual to digital data collection and standardize reporting formats.**
- **Re-establish Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas to enhance co-management and enforcement.**
- **Invest in sustainable income-generating activities, such as seaweed and sea cucumber farming, and support value addition and market access.**
- **Ensure active participation of women and youth in BMU governance and economic activities.**
- **Conduct regular reviews, share best practices, and document progress across BMUs.**


We extend our sincere thanks to the leadership of Kaole, Kisutu, and Dunda BMUs for their time and openness during the engagement. Special appreciation goes to the fisheries officers from Bagamoyo District for their technical support.

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