

Project Update: February 2021

Introduction

This report is an accomplishment of the project's *Work Package 100*, which was conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. It involved mobilisation of local communities, i.e., the Turtle Conservation Groups (TCGs), learning institutions and other relevant management stakeholders including the private sectors.

First and foremost, we want to acknowledge changes that have occurred in the project management during the implementation process, with the two co-PIs being replaced upon their request due to transfer to different town with the project not capable to cover their travel costs to conduct the project activities. Hassan relocated to Lamu and his role has been taken over by Neville Agesa from Diani Turtle Watch while Josephine transferred to Nairobi and has been replaced by Mr. Said Shee Mohamed, a Sergeant from Kenya Wildlife Service (Kisite Mpunguti Marine National Reserve and Park) based in the South Coast of Kenya.

The mobilisation process took about 21/2 months (end of December 2020 – February 2021) and involved visitation and consultation with different stakeholder groups and official invitation to the project through physical visits to the TCG offices and sites and meeting with the officials, emails and phone calls. Some of the groups visited include Kisite Marine Park - Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Conservation Education Society, Diani Turtle Watch, Msambweni TCG and Shimoni TCG. Due to the new COVID-19 rules, the Ministry of Education banned all visits to schools and therefore the project team resolved to working with Conservation Education Society, which have an open centre, to conduct outdoor activities and mentor selected students (ambassadors) in different schools around at the centre. Five students will be selected in five primary schools that together with four students from Technical University of Mombasa will be mentored through engagement in project activities.



Project Planning Meeting, left project team members Neville Agesa (left) and Bakari Ali (right) in Diani and in the other photo meeting with Shimoni BMU chair Mr. Rishard (White Cap) and his secretary Mr. Ndalú.

Inception Meeting

This was conducted as the last part of the WP 100. It was spearheaded by Nancy Oduor who is the project PI and representative of Eracoma, Kenya Conservation of Aquatic Resources (KCAR) and Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI). The meeting was attended by 24 stakeholders representing different conservation and management, government and private institutions in the region. The purpose of the meeting was to officially introduce the RSG project to all the invited stakeholders and identify areas of collaboration to achieve the project's goal of sea turtle protection and conservation in the area. In summary, the meeting was held to:

- Identifying turtle conservation groups and their roles in the area.
- Establish the current status of turtle conservation and problems facing turtles and their habitats.
- Establish most pressing turtle conservation needs in the area.
- Establish turtle nesting trends in the area.

Meeting Outcomes

Turtle conservation groups and their roles in the Kenya's South Coast

Eight major community-based turtle conservation groups (TCGs) were identified in the area. These were:

GROUP	Current Status	Roles	Challenges
Tiwi TCG	Active under Tiwi Turtle Police Initially under Diani Turtle Watch	Beach Patrols Nest monitoring Clean-up activities. Education and Awareness campaigns. Arrest of poachers	Lack of resources i.e., beach monitoring materials; clean-up activities; means of reaching KWS in case of poaching cases.
Diani TCG	Active under Diani Turtle Watch. Divided into 6 major regions i.e., Tiwi, Diani north, Mwaepe, Kinondo, Chale and Funzi.	Members trained by Watamu. Turtle Watch for turtle monitoring and data collection. Beach patrols. Nest monitoring. Turtle rescue operations from by-catches. Beach Clean-ups Mangrove forests rehabilitation. Community environmental education and awareness.	Lack of appreciation of Volunteers efforts Lack of alternative sources of income by volunteers. Cultural beliefs in medicinal value of sea turtle oils. High poaching especially in Funzi. Conflicts with community when reported with poaching cases. Lack of resources e.g., boats to reach to Funzi Island with high poaching cases.

	Funzi TCG - Partially active under Diani Turtle Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach patrols • Nest monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privatization of nesting beaches hence loss of nesting sites • Poaching - this has reduced through the support from KWS • Lack of incentives /support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting laws /policies and legislations • Lack of recognition of community efforts. • Lack of alternative sources of livelihoods.
	Chale - Active under Diani Turtle Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying turtle nesting sites and ensuring that they are safe. • Natural barriers (trees) hinder the nesting sites for turtles • Monitoring and recording of turtle data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poaching • Lack of alternative sources of livelihoods. • Privatization of nesting beaches
Msambweni TCG	Active under Msambweni Turtle and marine conservation group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting beach and community clean-ups • Creating awareness on importance of turtle conservation to the community and fishermen. • They have an information Centre where people can learn more on conservation. • Collaborating with other organization like Base Titanium during waste recycling and collection. • Recording turtle data and reporting to KWS. • Educating school kids and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of modern equipment for data recording and storage of turtle data • Construction along the shores and lighting affect turtle nesting • Climate affects the hatching process • Insufficient funds/lack of support • Turtle poaching • Turtle entanglement by fishing nets - Bycatch

		<p>through arts and videos with conservation themes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting regular beach patrols. • Members have been trained on how to mark nesting sites. 	
Munje	Not active,	Not represented	Not Identified
Shimoni – Mkwiro	Not active, previously managed by Shimoni BMU	Used to report turtle sightings. No nesting but turtle feeding sites. Used to conduct tagging Reporting of bycatches and poaching cases.	Lack of necessary monitoring resources. Lack of stable livelihoods. Lack of recognition and appreciation.
Vanga	Not active,	Not represented	Not Identified
Jimbo	Not active,	Not represented	Not Identified
Mwazaro	Not active,	Not represented	Not Identified

It was noted that Diani Turtle Watch have a marine education Centre and conducts mapping of turtle nesting areas from Waa to Funzi with the help of the local community volunteers. Despite Diani Turtle Watch working in the six listed regions, only 1-2 volunteers are financially compensated for the activities carried this demoralising the efforts of other people creating conflicts among the volunteers. Also, much of DTW's activities are done in easily accessible areas in Diani with high tourism activities leaving remote areas like Funzi and Chale islands exposed and vulnerable to poaching.

Management and Private Stakeholders invited

Local/County Government of Kwale:

The representative from the Environment and Energy Department also explained their role in environmental conservation including the conservation of turtles. He promised to collaborate with the project team to ensure its effective implementation and long-term impacts on the communities in the region. The support included working with the groups in managing marine litter through provision of cleaning materials and waste collection trucks.

National Government/Kenya Wildlife Service

The representative from KWS explained the role played by their organisation and laws and regulations that govern the management of turtle and their habitats. He also advised the communities to keep on reporting poaching activities and informed them of penalties of those found poaching the turtles and their products. Some of the roles mentioned include:

- Law enforcement on turtle poachers.
- Standard ways of turtle data recording should be adopted.
- Human generated activities that affect turtle conservation should be reduced.
- The conservationist should find means on how to benefit from data being collected/data management actions.
- High mortality rate of turtle has been reported.
- There are reduced cases of turtle poaching.
- Community perception on some benefits of eating turtle meat should be discouraged.
- Conducting regular patrols is expensive.

Private Sector/Base Titanium

The representative explained the role they play in environmental conservation and the kind of support they provide the CBOs. These include:

- Conducting coastal clean-ups with BMUs and other stakeholders.
- Linking the community with wasterecyclers.
- Providing incentives to the local community during clean-ups.
- Conducting environmental education programs in schools.

The representative agreed to support the project and the community groups and schools in ensuring effective implementation and conduction of education and awareness campaigns. This involves marine litter management and provision of other resources necessary for fieldworks.

Other stakeholders that agreed to collaborate included the Kwale Plastic Plus, a private sector working on recycling of plastics within Kwale County and Conservation Education Society located in Diani conducting education programmes on marine conservation and management.

Lastly, one major outcome of the meeting was an agreement of all the invited stakeholders to work together not only for the project but beyond. A WhatsApp group was therefore established for discussing and planning the project activities, exchanging turtle conservation ideas, reporting poaching and other management issues in the area.

Conclusion

There was a clear indication of the need to bring all the TCGs and all other stakeholders to ensure effective management of turtles in Kenya's South Coast. It was also clear that the volunteers are demoralised by lack of recognition and support of their conservation efforts. Resources including turtle monitoring materials including boats for accessing remote areas like Funzi and Chale are also necessary as high poaching cases have been reported in the areas. The project team together with KWS and Base titanium representatives agreed to: work with students under Conservation Education Society; search for absent TCGs representatives; work with all the TCGs in the Kenya South Coast region through capacity building, provision of needed materials including lunch allowances during patrols and alternative income sources for the volunteers. The project team agreed to plan for a training programme to all the volunteers from the eight TCGs to help in monitoring turtle nesting trends and marine litter in the area.



Stakeholder groups representatives during Inception meeting at Shimoni BMU Headquarters



Stakeholder representatives' presentations during Inception meeting at Shimoni BMU Headquarters



A representative from Msambweni TCG Explaining nest features.



Demonstration of boundaries of Marine Protected Areas by Ali She, KWS representative.



Inception Meeting Group.



Lunchbreak during the inception meeting.



Neville Agesa (blue shirt) conducting nest relocation operation with students.



The project field assistant (Bakari Ali) explaining to the attendants the purpose of the project.



Turtle nest inspection at Diani Beach.