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"Promoting Social Accountability for Equitable Fisheries Within Beach Management Units in Lake Victoria (Kenya)"

Etiegni, Christine Adhiambo, Michelle Kooy, and Kenneth Irvine

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The decentralisation of resource management through co-management assumes that the devolution of power benefits resource users. This assumption is often premised on the democratic election of leaders within resource user organisations. In this article, we investigate the validity of co-management assumptions about who benefits from a devolution of decision-making power through a case study analysis of political equity in fisherfolk organisations of Beach Management Units (BMUs) in Lake Victoria (Kenya). From the analysis of the distribution of political power, we identify how, where, and for whom greater accountability can work to address the current political inertia of fisherfolk, who form a majority of the BMU membership. We also identify the relationships between the empowerment of fisherfolk, the accountability of the BMU leaders, and the distribution of political power determining decision making in co-management. We conclude with identifying how other mechanisms of social accountability beyond elections can improve accountability of elected leaders of resource users for improved co-management outcomes. (Text from authors' abstract)

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