

Wellbeing in small-scale fishing communities in South Africa

Philile Mbatha*, Sarah Coulthard**, Janne Rohe*

*University of Cape Town

**Northumbria University

Abstract

Coastal resources play a significant role in supporting the livelihoods and contributing to the wellbeing of marginalised communities in South Africa. Through an analysis of four small-scale-fishing communities in South Africa, this research sought to understand how and why benefits arising from the use of coastal resources in the fisheries sector are shared in the manner that they are; and the contribution of the fisheries sector to the wellbeing of small-scale fishing communities. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data. Findings reveal that despite the fact that communities have benefited from fisheries, the sector has also had negative economic and social impacts on livelihoods. In the fisheries sector, co-management arrangements have enhanced resource sustainability, but regulations have restricted the extent to which fishers can benefit economically from marine resources. In this sector, the lack of decentralization of decision-making about resource access, use and control presents a key institutional blockage for benefit sharing. Due to a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities for small-scale fishing communities, there has been increased pressure on conservation institutions to play a developmental role at the community level. Similarly, the private sector and non-governmental institutions have been increasingly providing basic services that are the traditional preserve of government. This has compromised the potential of communities to fully benefit from the economic opportunities provided by the fisheries sector. Findings of this study affirm the need for fisheries governance strategies to reflect the needs of poor fishing communities