

Case study D: Governing mangrove forests in Kenya

Why mangrove forests?

Mangrove forests are found in intertidal zones, occupying the land-sea interface. They provide multiple benefits from ecosystem services, such as timber, fuelwood, coastal protection and a habitat for fish and crustaceans. In addition, mangrove forests are an important sink for carbon emissions, storing carbon in the trees, roots and soil. The provision of multiple benefits and their location at the land-sea interface means that many actors and structures are involved in mangrove governance. Mangrove forests therefore present a complex case for the governance of social-ecological systems.

Who is involved in governing mangrove forests?

Within government, very often the lead sector with responsibility for the mangrove forest is forestry. This is the case in Kenya, with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) taking the lead. Because of their importance for fisheries, fisheries management structures, priorities and approaches affect mangrove forests. Mangrove forests are part of the coastal zone and so also fall within Integrated Coastal Zone Management, led in Kenya by the National Environmental Management Authority. Other policy areas that may affect how a mangrove forest is used and managed include land-use planning, tourism and urban development.



Drone footage of Gazi Bay (Rob Barnes, <http://www.grida.no/resources/11069>)



Fisherman from Gazi (Rob Barnes, <http://www.grida.no/resources/11055>)

Characteristics of the governance of mangrove forests in Kenya

In addition to several parts of central government being involved in the governance of mangrove forests, the governance system also involves local government, community structures and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The governance system is characterised by:

1. **Decentralisation:** responsibilities for natural resources are found at the decentralised County government level as well as at national level.

2. **Participation:** several natural resource sectors in Kenya have adopted participatory approaches to management, including the formation of Community Forest Associations and, in fisheries, Beach Management Units.
3. **Multi-actor and multi-level:** other actors such as Village Heads and committees and NGOs also affect how mangrove forests are used and managed. The governance system therefore includes multiple administrative levels and multiple actors.

Table 1 summarises the sectoral interests in the governance of mangrove forests in Kenya

Table 1 **Sectoral interests in mangrove governance**

Sector	National	Decentralised and village levels
Forestry	Kenya Forest Service	Community Forestry Association (CFA)
Fisheries	State Department of Fisheries	Beach Management Units (BMUs)
Wildlife, including Marine Protected Areas	Kenya Wildlife Service	Marine Conservation Areas or Locally Managed Marine Areas
Environment and coastal	National Environmental Management Authority	No community-based structures
Other government functions and provision of public services	Ministries	County Governments employ officers for forestry, fisheries and environmental management as well as have elected officers; village heads appointed by national government

Questions for discussion

1. How would you describe the governance of mangrove forests in Kenya?
2. What challenges do you think might be faced in effectively governing mangrove forests?
3. How could these challenges be overcome?

Further reading

- Kairu, A., Upton, C., Huxham, M., Kotut, K., Mbeche, R., Kairo, J. (2017) From shiny shoes to muddy reality: Understanding how meso-State actors negotiate the implementation gap in Participatory Forest Management. *Society and Natural Resources* **31**: 74-88.
- Nunan, F. (2018) Navigating multi-level natural resource governance: an analytical framework. *Natural Resources Forum* **42**: 159-171.