

## **Ban on Night Fishing and Lack of Modern Equipment hurts**

### **Fishermen**

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A fisherman prepares Tuna fish for sale at Shela beach in Lamu County, Fishermen in the county have said that the ban on night fishing had adversely affected them with half their number ditching the trade

**By Kalume Kazungu**

The fishing industry in Lamu County is facing a myriad of challenges that put it on the brink of collapse. Fishing is considered one of the backbones of the region's economy; and apart from tourism it contributes to more than 50 percent of the county's economy. However, for the past seven years, the industry has suffered immensely due to the ban on night fishing imposed by the government following increased terror attacks by Al-Shabaab and the kidnapping of fishermen and

tourists. In May 2017, the national government lifted the ban but the fishermen say it is still being enforced. Major fishing destinations and hubs such as Mkokoni, Kiwayu, Ndau, Kiunga and Ishakani on the border of Lamu and Somalia are the most affected.

## **HARASSMENT**

Fishermen who talked to the Nation on Monday said aside from being denied access to the ocean at night, they are harassed by security agencies during the day, which they say has forced some of them to quit the trade. Lamu East alone has about 6,000 fishermen but due to the said harassment, only 3,000 are still engaged in the activity. “Our sector is dwindling almost on a daily basis. We fear the sector will die if something is not done. “They said the night fishing ban has been lifted but the truth is that they don’t allow us to go to the sea at night. Once you are spotted you are always arrested, molested and harassed by security agencies,” Mr Mohamed Ali, Faza Beach Management Unit chairman, said. The fishermen are now urging the government to change its strategy by offering them safety. “Instead of banning us from fishing at night, they should think of organising us into groups and then escort us to the sea at night. Our appeal is for us to be allowed to fish at night since that’s the time you can make a good catch rather than during daytime,” Mr Islam said.

## **TOOLS**

Another key challenge facing the industry is inadequate modern fishing equipment. Local fishermen have for decades depended on traditional fishing methods, but they now believe that to be more competitive they need modern tools - which will enable them fish in the high seas. “We are concerned. Our fishing sector is now crumbling. We urge the county government through Governor Fahim Twaha to improve the fishing infrastructure in this region to boost the trade. They bought us a few boat engines but those aren’t enough. Most of us still use traditional tools and methods and that’s why there is nothing much in terms of profit,” he

observed. “We especially worry about Somalia fishermen who seem to have everything needed for deep sea fishing, and we can’t match up to that and definitely we can’t compete in the same market and win.”

## **DREDGING**

In Lamu West, most artisanal fishermen have abandoned their trade following dredging to allow construction of the first three deep sea berths for Lapsset project at Kililana. The dredging has destroyed major and safer fishing channels and breeding grounds. Other challenges include poor road infrastructure and lack of a common market as among the challenges hindering expansion of the trade..