

Community perceptions of water hyacinth and its management in lake Victoria: the case of Mwanza gulf in Misungwi, Mwanza, Tanzania

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Most researches on water hyacinth and its management in Mwanza gulf have focused on the ecological component of this invasive alien species, either without considering or by considering in a restricted way, the perceptions of the community. This study aims at assessing the community perceptions regarding water hyacinth and its management in Mwanza gulf of Lake Victoria in Misungwi district Tanzania. Community perceptions are the key to sustainable management of water hyacinth because much of the pertinent information on the status and dynamics of the weed resides with people who are affected by it. The study employs the Participatory Rapid Appraisal approach for data collection and analysis. The study assesses community's perceptions regarding knowledge and understanding of water hyacinth, indigenous and modern methods of water hyacinth management and awareness of the community on institutions and legislations that govern water hyacinth management. Finally, the study considers what the local community perceives as the practical solutions to sustainable management of water hyacinth. The major findings of the study are; the majority of the respondents perceive water hyacinth proliferation to cause detrimental effects to their livelihoods. There is no vast knowledge of indigenous management methods considered effective for water hyacinth management by the local community. It is also observed that there is minimal awareness of technical methods for water hyacinth management in the local community. Institutional awareness is higher for local institutions than for governmental and national institutions. The observation also shows that the local community is committed to participate in implementing solutions they proposed on water hyacinth management. Basing on the findings of this study, there is a need to integrate the local community perceptions in sustainable water hyacinth management programmes. It is recommended that water hyacinth management

issues should be handled best with the effective collaboration and participation of all concerned stake holders starting from the grassroots level to the highest level.