

## **Additional Q&A from the Coral Communities webinar 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**1. Thanks for sharing this fascinating project! Did you find people were immediately willing to participate? Was there a particular reason that people were keen to participate (was there a specific change/message they wanted to see or communicate?). Were there certain members of the community that seemed more willing or able than others and if so, how did this effect your findings?**

Thanks for the question Laura, I'll give a perspective from my side as working with the local partners to answer part of your question: Mwambao as an organisation spend a lot of time meaningfully building trust with communities, so I'd say this positive and existing relationship played a crucial role in the communities' participation. The same was true in Mauritius and our partnership with Reef Conservation. In these sorts of cross-cultural research partnerships (and the power dynamics often between funding and institutions from high income countries and participants in low and middle-income countries), truly engaging with local partners in research design and the process itself is key. As a 9 month project we would not have expected to work with communities directly, with no prior engagement. The participants in the project were diverse across age and gender suggesting that a range of community members were willing and able to participate. The government and NGO participants in Mauritius and the UK were intrigued by the creative elements of the methods and were, therefore, also seemingly willing and interested participants.

**2. Excuse me if this was covered earlier before I began the webinar, but I am wondering if any of this participatory creative methods were done along with the fisheries officials. I am asking because there have been some interesting Theatre of the Oppressed workshops in the past in the Azores being led by the women and their associations. Some of the people who have since become fisheries officials, were part of these workshops and thought they were useful. However, as soon as the official public consultation session were created then or years later, the powerful creative inclusive methods were ignored! it is so frustrating**

Great question Alison. In Zanzibar, there were actually multiple fisheries officials present. One of the lead facilitators (Ali Saidi) was a provincial fisheries official (and now a full-time member of the Mwamabo team!), and another facilitator was a district fisheries official, for whom Fundo was part of his jurisdiction. In the broader work that Mwambao do, community members present the findings of participatory data collection (octopus catch to measure impact of temporal reef closures) to officials. It's a really powerful process which shows fisheries and other government officials that communities can play an active role in co-management in practice rather than just in principle which is unfortunately often the case on Zanzibar. In Mauritius, government representatives were involved in the workshop activities and creative participatory methods but not together with the community members. These were run as separate activities in this case as we were piloting activities. But as you say, as a vehicle for

change it is a good idea to use the methods to enhance collaborative working across communities and officials.

**3. Thanks so much for a great presentation. Just wondering if you invited local artists to be involved in co-facilitating / co-documenting the project? Answered live by Dom**

**4. Loved seeing your presentation and ways of working - really inspiring! I have two quick questions - Did you research also include your own reflections on positionality eg. via reflective diaries or something similar? Did you also explore ways of sharing these outcomes and communities' perspectives with local or national decision-makers? Answered live by Dom and Louisa**

**5. What an incredible project - A couple of questions. How long did you spend with each community and how did you find participants? Has there been any follow up to maintain communications with the communities following the conclusion of the workshops and data collation?**

Good question Ellie, thanks. Participants were identified through the established partnerships between Mwambao and Reef Conservation and the communities in Zanzibar and Mauritius. It is quite hierarchical and formal in Zanzibar where engagement is directed through the Sheha (village head). An ongoing challenge there is ensuring diverse representation of community members as it must be balanced against the significant political sensitivities and tensions between Pemba Island and the ruling government of Zanzibar. In terms of follow-up, Mwambao continues to work with the community of Fundo for broader fisheries co-management work. Similarly, Reef conservation continues to work closely with communities on issues of marine conservation and resilience, including recent responses to the oil spill in Mauritius. In terms of the project itself, continued engagement with the communities – as opposed to the NGO partners – is more challenging. We continue to develop spin off activities that build on Coral Communities and endeavour to continue to work in the WIO but we are as constrained by funding as many of you will be.

**6. How have your studies, projects and initiatives been impacted with the general protection data regulation and privacy issues?**

Our project passed through ethics clearance at PML and Exeter, which takes into account GDPR regulations in the conduct of research. Other than ensuring the project complies in terms of how it collects, stores, shares and destroys personal and research data, which takes a little thought and care we don't perceive any particular impacts to the project itself.

**7. Very interesting webinar thank-you. I was just wondering what the participants gained from the experience. I am sure that they enjoyed it but**

ultimately how did this help them on the ground? Perhaps this is part of another discussion. *Answered live by Louisa*

**8. I'm interested in your observation of the tension between the ease of archiving/ analysing the data using the more traditional methods vs the possibly more inclusive creative methods. A tension which often plays out in community consultation. Have you found ways towards validating the creative method beyond it being a method of engagement. Is it perhaps towards validating the depth of value in the data of the creative method and being more critical of the traditional?**

Thank you. Yes, certainly we gained deeper and more diverse insight into people's lives and their resilience through the creative participatory methods, which we comprehensively documented (through audio, video and photographs). What was more difficult was systematically analysing all this material. With our limited (time and financial) resources we prioritised the piloting of the methods in real-time (with the benefits of engagement) rather than the follow-up processes of data transcription/translation and so on. We had written this into our grant and so as we started out, we were very clear we were testing and developing visual methods. We were focussing on developing a process, and this was to be the output, not the data collection. Of course we did and do need to discuss what the data collection would be. Future applications would also need to navigate this tension, and depending on your objectives you could choose to dedicate more resources to data processing and analysis.

We certainly would like to explore data collection and analysis, and experiment with it using these methods. Relatively speaking, data derived from traditional participatory processes are easier to collect and analyse but it is likely this is because there is lack of research in this area, and that we also need to be better resourced and more au fait with technology, and need even more interdisciplinarity/ human resource/ knowledge and time to co-create - co-experiment. However it is important to remember, that in visual methods such as PV, the process of making the film is seen as important as the film. Our NGO partner in Zanzibar, Mwambo, reminded us of this on several occasions.

**9. I am wondering what types of experiences you've had with natural scientists (either from universities or government, who work on reef conservation or other local natural science research? Have they been helpful and respect your expertise in community arts, social science etc, or did they challenge you?**

We had natural scientists on the project team and involved as participants in the workshops. The interactions were helpful and respectful. The research team are often involved in interdisciplinary projects, and the workshop participants are NGO practitioners or government officials and researchers who are tuned into on-the-ground and community dynamics, which straddle natural and social science domains. As a research team we spoke openly about differences in our training, expertise and lived experience. Even across social science and arts it is interesting to note how you might see and communicate differently. In this project, the

interdisciplinary configuration was a real strength. We recognise that is not always the case and we have had less fruitful interactions in other projects. At the start of the project, the artists did find that they had to prove that the co-work they were proposing was practical and relevant and as we said earlier, that making art is productive. As the team grew together this almost melted away, especially when the process was able to be re-run in Zanzibar in a different faith and landscape setting. Now we find it's some outside audiences we are having to work on who question and query the method(s). One comment directed to one of the artists has been, it looks great, but aren't they just having fun. We need to keep developing these methods and with NGO's, and writing and picturing them in publication.

What we did gain was more of an understanding of the differences within disciplines. This helped us to understand and mutually respect each others disciplines. For instance, the artists did try and explain how differently they were trained from each other. They were from different arts disciplines and were bringing different 'arts' and so skills and angles to the table, (and not just community arts). They were differently trained from each other, like natural scientists and social scientists. Often people see just an 'artist'. It's like an artist just seeing a 'scientist' and not understanding the different background and training and motivation of the scientist. What really helped draw respect between artists and scientists, and NGO's and governments, was when we workshopped all together. People could see one artist working that way, another that way and so forth. Pennies started to drop.