

## **ABSTRACT**

Fishing bans are widely used as fisheries management tools, yet their effect on vulnerable fishing communities is poorly understood. We explored perceptions of fishermen and Fisheries Officers regarding a first-ever fishing ban on Lake Tanganyika, Zambia. Opinions were collected from 184 fishers and 16 Fisheries Officers using structured and semi-structured questionnaires. Fishers' livelihoods and social well-being were significantly disrupted, with 92.5% reporting income loss, 77.5% facing unemployment, and 68.8% suffering economic hardship. Hunger (37.5%), divorce (37.5%), and theft (25.0%) were also reported. In response, many fishers adopted coping strategies such as farming (45%), trading (40%), and brick-molding (30%). Fisheries Officers identified key implementation challenges, notably illegal fishing (87.5%), resistance from fishermen (81.3%), and untimely funding (68.8%), but they also noted opportunities such as promoting sustainable fishing (93.8%) and enhancing platforms for extension services (62.5%). Alternative fishing areas did not significantly influence support for the ban, whereas having alternative income sources reduced the likelihood of support for the ban. Support for the ban was significantly associated with perceived positive opportunities and education level. We conclude that fishing bans can enhance sustainability, but their success depends on providing alternative livelihoods for fishermen and timely institutional support. Further research is needed on the effects of fishing bans on other stakeholders, like traders, transporters, and processors.