



Lake Niassa Reserve

Background:

The need to preserve the unspoiled condition of the Lake Niassa and the recommendation for the creation of a conservation area to better harness the existing tourism potential are included in the PEP-2017 and in the Niassa Tourism Development Plan (PDTN – 2005).

In a first phase, and as result of various processes, an agreement was signed with NATHAN ASSOCIATES INC. to design a program for the development of tourism in Northern Mozambique (Niassa, Cabo-Delgado, and Nampula) which was approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2006.

The establishment of the Lake Niassa Reserve is a project of the Mozambican Government (within the scope of the agreement with the USAID) and it is facilitated by the WWF, whose objective is to reduce poverty through the preservation of the environment which will protect one of the world's unique ecosystem and habitats that only occur in Lake Niassa.

This is a project still in its inception and reflects the WWF's mission and conservation policies, which are accomplished through the strengthening and enhancement of the capacity to manage natural

resources by both the institutions and the local communities, and the creation of conditions which enable the transfer of the Land Use Right and the management of that same land. Based in the latest development, resulting from the joint work being carried out by the WWF, the Government, and local communities, the Reserve will be declared before December 2010.

Objectives

- Establishment a new protected area in and around Lake Niassa that will contribute to the conservation of the diversity, abundance, and ecological integrity of the Lake's physical and biological resources so that they may be enjoyed and used productively by present and future generations;
- Development of village level monitoring schemes for overfishing, deforestation, and erosion, as well as mitigation strategies;
- Enhance community capacity among men and women to use and manage Lake Resources in a sustainable way in coordination with relevant authorities.





Achievements

- Promotion of 11 fishers co-management councils establishment in Ngolongue, Ngala, Mchepa, Meluluca-headquarters and Lussefa located in southern region of the proposed reserve area;
- To date, 23 community rangers have been trained and are working with the SDAE's. The project continues to support the institutional strengthening of the districts and supports their management of the law enforcement agents;
- Illegal fishing activities are moving out of the community areas, which are involved in the project, this is a sign of the sensitization of the communities and efforts to reduce illegal activities inside their own areas Capacity building of communities in NRM laws and legislation;
- In June 2010, a total of 35 fishers were trained by the fisheries department in the new aquatic law and other legislation documents to improve fisheries mgt at the community level;
- A new livelihood program started that will serve to stimulate well cooperating CCP's/associations and provide alternatives for shore fishing especially during the defence period (reproduction pe-

riod of fish). Three engines have already been bought, boats are being constructed currently. Due to this initiative of the project, fisheries have also developed their own program that complements with additional 3 boats and engines;

- Development of village level monitoring schemes for overfishing, deforestation, and erosion, as well as mitigation strategies;
- Creation of a two-way dialogue about management at District level: there was a good village participation in this dialogue;
- All affected communities nominated one ranger: 90% of these completed Ranger school and were confirmed in their posts.

Short story of Lake Niassa

As a reflection of the continuous success in the management of natural resources in Lake Niassa, local communities are beginning to sustainably enjoy their nature: the rich biodiversity of the lake.

For a long time one of the biggest problems within the local communities living around Lake Niassa was the use of improper fishing nets, which simply destroyed the natural habitat of the lake and left no juvenile fish. These fine-meshed nets were strongly promoted by foreign fishermen who use to come and fish in the lake's waters without any permission. Local communities were strongly dependent on them and on their techniques, as there was no other option in terms of fishing gears.

During the community consultations and Lake Niassa Reserve Management Plan preparation, WWF was seriously requested to help change this situation.

Another problem was the beach seining; this method of fishing with large fine-meshed nets along the beach was considered seriously harmful to the habitat and because it is not selective. It contributed for the depletion of fish stocks. After a lot of field work with communities and local authorities, WWF managed to facilitate the establishment of local CCP's (Fishing Community Councils). These are now in charge for the control of all fishing activities in the lake. Now there are community agents ensuring the law is complied with and there is access to recommended fishing nets (3", 3 1/2" and even 5"). The quality and size of catch has increased considerably, previously with fine-meshed nets fishers used to catch 5 to 7cm sized fish. Now they can fish 15 to 20cm sized fish; this is a more than 100% increase in size and, obviously, quality.

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