WWF for a living planet®

PROJECT TECHNICAL PROGRESS REPORT

Project Name	Lake Niassa Reserve Project, Phase II
Project Number	656-G-00-08-00218-00
Project Start Date (FY)	September 2006
Date Report Completed (MM/YR)	20 July 2009
Report Completed By	Peter H Bechtel and Albino Nandja

1. PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Outcomes, Impacts Achieved and Progress on Activities

1. WWF used the Provincial-level coordination committee to pressure the various Ministries, particularly Fisheries, to make comments and react to the reserve documents in a timely manner. This was done and comments came in with only small delays. From there WWF and partners were able to have very successful **district and provincial seminars** to approve the documents with a large variety of stakeholders present (see below).

2. The General Management Plan, Zoning Plan, Justification Document, and Financial Plan with three scenarios was finished and approved by the provincial Government. The Governor, in an all-government meeting, signed the documents and sent them to national level. They have been circulated and went to the national Harmonization Committee in June. As a part of this process, an initiative from the Fisheries Department to do aquaculture with the indigenous chambo (tilapia) species was analyzed and found to be a good idea as long as there was no species translocation within the lake. Due to high levels of endemism, translocated species have a tendency to hybridize, thus reducing the uniqueness and biodiversity of the Lake. The land dispute with UMOJI was resolved by acknowledging in the Reserve Documents that UMOJI will continue to have co-management rights within their project area. Two very positive decisions about artesanal fisheries were taken: one was to ban all fishing within 200 meters of river mouths and in rivers during the Lake Salmon run. In the past Lake Salmon were a source of cheap and easily caught protein for people as concentrated and ran up the rivers. Now however, overfishing means that the population of fish cannot withstand the pressure. Communities recognized that and agreed to ban all fishing during the run. Secondly, the field technical team proposed a ban on beach seining during the time of reproduction of the chambo species. Communities went even further and proposed a ban on all beach seining at any time, to protect seagrass habitats as well. The technical team agreed, but that this is done in a phased manner over several years.

3. Earlier this month the harmonization committee met three times at national level to appreciate and comment on the documents and there was a general consensus that the reserve should go forward but also some few small additions to the draft management plan. These were done and the final Management plan is now ready to go towards the Council of Ministers for declaration.

4. The long-running (and induced by third parties) conflict with the UMOJI Association was finally resolved in a very positive manner. The project team, after nearly two years of asking were finally shown the UMOJI project maps. It turned out that much of the area claimed by UMOJI association was actually community lands, not UMOJI lands. UMOJI leaders as well as the tourist operator that was inciting UMOJI recognized that the limits on the map were the actual limits and this conflict subsided. It subsided even more when UMOJI attended consultative meetings and heard the details of the draft management plan, which had carefully defended both community rights as well as the rights of the Association. The last step of the process was signing a MoU between UMOJI and WWF for UMOJI to divulge the new Reserve Regulations in the northern part of the Reserve. In the provincial seminar UMOJI came out as strong defenders of the management plan and the Reserve. Presently UMOJI has petitioned WWF to help them establish their community conservancy and we are making preliminary studies on the feasibility of this, including studies to see if animal numbers are sufficient to promote safari tourism in the interior zones.

5. Community ranger teams continue functioning and enforcing existing fishing laws supported by the Navy. The teams are supervised by the local District Administration. Joint patrolling with the Navy is a bi-weekly occurrence. Captures during this period include 16 logs, 11 bags of charcoal, 7 bundles of firewood (all destined for Malawi), and a chainsaw. The community rangers also enforce the payment of fishing licenses in cooperation with the *SPP - Serviços Provinciais de Pesca.* As far as the use of Mosquito netting, in most *Centros de Pesca* (Village Fishing zones) mosquito netting is being removed, however some areas are still in the informational phase. Fisheries officials are sending mixed signals here, affirming the need to remove mosquito netting when speaking in an official context but not supporting much any enforcement efforts.

6. Due to community demand, the reserve ended up 40 kms longer than originally planned. This was important for biodiversity reasons as it allowed us to include the world-famous Minos Reef and its unique collection of endemics cichlids in the reserve. Communities specifically wanted help when they saw that the reserve would target protection of species during spawning periods. Some Communities (i.e. Colongue) are reporting higher levels of artisanal fish capture after only one year of work.

7. Cooperation with the Fisheries Ministry increased dramatically. 7 CCP's (Conselhos Comunitarios de Pesca) were created at village level, with more planned for this forthcoming year. Even more important the Small Scale Fisheries Development institute has opened a delegation in the area and its staff is working very well with other stakeholders.

B. Challenges Affecting Performance

One challenge was to create a reserve management plan that all villages would approve of, as law requires that all affected villages approve the management plan and reserve borders, zoning plans, etc. Government and WWF took this very seriously, extending a two year outreach effort during the first phase of the project. Not until communities understood the dynamics of degradation of

their habitats and fish resources did we open the discussion on mitigation and management strategies. We used the techniques of PRA and moved in a slow and stepwise fashion. The management plan for example went through three community revisions before it was sent to the national level for harmonization and final technical revision. So pleased are communities with the results that some are already implementing mitigation and management plans even before official declaration, and all communities have put forward candidates for ranger training, 24 of which are already trained and on the job and 15 more nominated.

The project started on a very restricted budget, but so far we have been managing. Financing of future phases is the most serious challenge facing the future of reserve. To establish the reserve with all necessary infrastructures, research programmes, and staffing and training will cost an estimated $6,000,000 over the next 5 years. Our collective challenge will be to find that level of financing.

As far as sustainable financing, we (WWF-Mozambique) are actively involved in the national sustainable financing initiative, as well as national REDD carbon committee. WWF played an instrumental part in Mozambique's acceptance into the World Bank's carbon forest partnership programme. REDD carbon is a real possible financing source from the extensive buffer zone. Furthermore, reduction of deforestation and controlling runoff from rivers in this buffer zone are essential steps in maintaining lake water quality and insuring cichlid survival, so there are some synergies. Lastly, WWF has assisted The Quirimbas NP to establish a voluntary 5% of total facturation contribution to communities and conservation and this will also be a way to overcome the low fees gazetted for entry into parks and reserves in Mozambique.

C. Success Stories

Success stories mentioned earlier include:

1. Community decisions to ban all beach seining;
2. Community decisions to stop fishing during the lake salmon runs;
3. Community requests to extend the reserve an additional 40 km to the south, allowing for the world-famous Minos Reef to be included in the reserve.

2. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE

The project clearly identifies the area, threats, mitigation measures, biodiversity, habitats, etc. These are collated in the very detailed Justification Document and Management Plan, Business Plan, and Cash Flow Scenarios that have been developed. The project has spent much time engaging local stakeholders and government to the point where consensus has been reached about how the area will need to be managed, and these ideas have been brought together in the management plan.

Monitoring and evaluation of project progress indicators have been clear from the start; however, biodiversity indicators have been less so due to the absence of baseline data (there are approximately 3-500 species of fish in the lake that have yet to be taxonomically described, for example). WWF-Mozambique, with assistance from WWF-US, is developing a monitoring plan

to overcome this difficulty which needs to be online from the moment the reserve is officially declared, so we can have pre-reserve and post-reserve scenarios to compare.

3. RISKS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS ACHIEVED

The top three risks in terms of likelihood and impact to the project's achievement being sustained over the long-term include the following:

1. Climate change risks include more variable rainfall, more runoff and erosion, thereby muddying the lake and reducing fish food supply, and especially will produce changes to community livelihoods. Emergency food security coping strategies generally involve more use and more direct dependence on natural resources, to the detriment of biodiversity. As of this writing climate change mitigation adaptation strategies have not been a part of project planning. However, both of our present donors have indicated a desire to have this included in future planning so climate change is being worked into future plans in a transversal fashion.
2. We need to be looking now for funds to cover start-up costs for the lake once the reserve has been declared.
3. The events of August 2008 have meant that Mozambique's tourism statistics are 30% of previous years. Thus it will be a challenge to attract investors and tourists for at least the next year and a half, possibly compromising tourism investment objectives. On the other hand, REDD carbon presents a new opportunity that may offset this.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Several innovative aspects of the approach in Lake Niassa are currently being replicated in other WWF-Mozambique projects:

1. The signing of a MoU with the provincial government to clarify and legitimize relations, and provide WWF political protection and cooperation.
2. Contracting out ranger services to the local District government guarantees their ownership and involvement in the patrolling/ protection process.
3. Time and contact with communities will eventually result in acceptance. It took for example two years to work with UMOJI, but now we can subcontract some environmental education jobs to them.

5. INFORMATION ON SECURITY ISSUES

At this point there is no information on security issues that would affect program integrity and safety of cooperating and implementing partners.