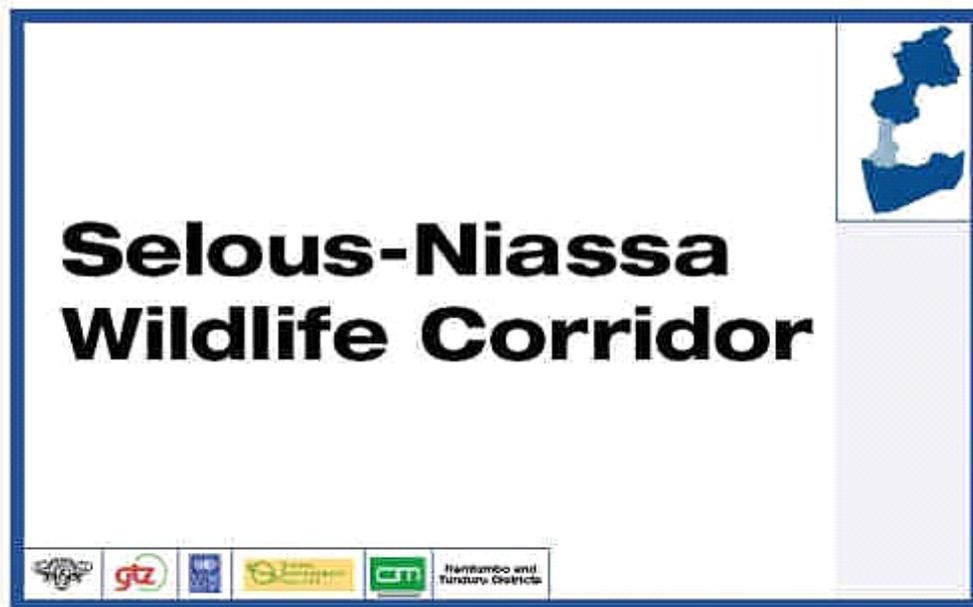




THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism



WILDLIFE DIVISION



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

TO

SELOUS – NIIASSA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

JULY 2008

Rudolf Hahn

Technical Adviser
SNWC/UNDP-GEF/GTZ-IS

Background to the Selous – Niassa Wildlife Corridor

Location

The corridor connects two large protected areas of Africa: The Selous Game Reserve of Tanzania, with 47.000 km² the largest and oldest reserve in Africa, since 1982 UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Niassa National Reserve of Mozambique with a size of 42.400 km². It is extending approximately from 10° S to 11°40' S over a north – south length of 160 km, measured from the most southern border of the Selous until reaching Ruvuma River, the border of the Niassa Reserve in Mozambique. Its east - west extension ranges from 150 km in the north along the Selous boundary to 176 km in the south following the course of Ruvuma River with the narrowest parts at the crossings of the Songea – Tunduru highway. In total it has a size of approximately 10.000 km².

Administration, Management

The corridor is located entirely in Southern Tanzania within Namtumbo and Tunduru Districts of Ruvuma Region. It is composed of a contiguous network of five Wildlife Management Areas managed by five Community Based Organisations (CBOs) representing 29 villages: Mbaran'gandu, Nalika, Chingoli, Kisungule, Kimbanda. The CBOs Mbaran'gandu and Nalika received already the status of Authorised Association to manage their gazetted Wildlife Management Areas in the northern part of the corridor with a size of 3000 km² and 1600 km² respectively. Law enforcement is carried out by village game scouts assisted by District, Selous and Anti-poaching Unit game rangers and in cooperation with game rangers of the Niassa Reserve.

Climate

The corridor experiences only one rainy season lasting from the end of November to April with a mean annual rainfall of 1233 mm per year. Rainfall does reach its peak from January to March. Coldest months are in July and August when the temperature can drop to 10 degrees Celsius in the night. The hottest month is November with the temperature reaching 36 degrees Celsius at Ruvuma River.

Topography

The northern part is generally hillier while the area towards the Ruvuma is slightly undulated to flat with isolated hills, some of them having prominent rock outcrops (inselbergs). Mtungwe Hill (1284m a.s.l.) in the centre of the Corridor is the highest elevation. The plateau, which shows also steep escarpments, slightly slopes to the Ruvuma River which reaches its lowest level of about 460m a.s.l. in the south-eastern corner of the Corridor. The soils are generally very sandy and washed-out.

Hydrology

Two drainage basins exist in the SNWC. North of the watershed, located roughly along the main Road Namtumbo-Tunduru, the rivers drain into the Rufiji River while south of the watershed the area is part of the Ruvuma drainage basin. Some of the major tributaries like Mbarangandu, Lukimwa, Luchilukuru, Luego or Msanjesi are usually permanent watercourses. Meandering through a pristine savannah woodland landscape with rocky outcrops and inselbergs, changing from rocky braided channels with numerous islands to sandy beaches and over small rapids to long stretched quiet pools the Ruvuma river forms with 176 km the border between the Corridor in Tanzania and the Niassa Reserve in Mozambique.

Vegetation

The main vegetation is Miombo Woodland of different plant compositions which opens up to savannah woodland with typical Baobab trees towards the Ruvuma River. A recently conducted study describes the different types of vegetation from dense forests, thickets, open savannahs and woodlands, wetlands and riverine forests to rocky outcrops. Ongoing research confirmed already 431 different plant species, several endangered and endemic to Tanzania, and identified a new tree species at Ruvuma River. The natural ecosystem provides for excellent wild mushrooms which are collected by the local people during the rainy season. For example the delicious Chanterelle is one of the 36 edible mushrooms out of 56 recently identified species. Also a variety of exotic tasting wild fruits, including the Marula, are not only fit for human consumption but also in high demand by elephants and other wildlife species. There are some interesting sites with petrified wood

Wildlife

Long-term and effective conservation management of the Selous and the two CBOs resulted into larger concentrations of wildlife in the northern part of the corridor. According to aerial surveys undertaken every three years the wildlife populations are stable. In the southern part the wildlife populations are rapidly recovering since the communities are actively involved in their management. However, wildlife is still timid and it will need some 2 – 3 years to reach sizable populations in the south.

The linkage of the Selous and Niassa Reserves with the corridor and adjacent conservation areas creates a protected elephant range of about 120.000 km², the size of Malawi, the largest on the African continent. Presently it contains an estimated population of 85.000 elephants, the largest herds of African buffalo and more than half of Africa`s remaining wild dogs.

The main species are: Elephant, Buffalo, Eland, Greater Kudu, Sable Antelope, Hippo, Lichtenstein Hartebeest, Common Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Common Duiker, Southern Reedbuck, Wildebeest, Zebra, Impala, Klippspringer, Warthog, Bush pig.

Leopards are common in the entire corridor whereas lions are more numerous in the northern part. In the south and in particular in Tunduru District man-

eating lions are recorded for decades. Spotted Hyena, Jackal, Civet Cat and others carnivore species are also common.

Several packs of Wild Dogs are frequently observed in all parts of the corridor. Signs of Black Rhino were reported but the size or viability of its population is not yet known.

Birds

Research was not yet carried out therefore the number of species can only be estimated to be approximately equivalent to the 400 species recorded in the Selous and Niassa Reserves with a similar ecosystem. From November onwards storks and other migratory birds are flocking in on their annual fly-way route to South Africa using the Ruvuma River ecosystem either as resting or nesting place in order to escape the winter time in Northern Europe. The African Skimmer populations at Ruvuma River, classified as globally threatened, are interesting for bird watchers and an indicator for a healthy river system.

Herpetofauna

Although not yet officially recorded the area contains a rich populations of reptiles and amphibians with a larger concentration of Nile Crocodiles in Ruvuma River with an estimated population density of two crocodiles/km.

Fish

The fish fauna of that area is still poorly known; research of the Niassa Reserve Management yielded so far 48 species.

History, culture, communities

The history of this area is linked with the history of northern Mozambique. Long distance trade on old trading routes to the settlements of Kilwa and Mikindani at the Indian Ocean and wars in the pre-colonial and colonial time as well as later in Mozambique had its influence on the culture and the people living in and around the corridor. The original ethnic groups settling in this area were the Udendeule and Ngindo. The Ngoni, a splinter group of the Zulu warrior tribe, immigrated from South Africa and the Yao, known for their slave and ivory trade, moved in from Mozambique in the 19th century. The Maji Maji War against the German Colonial Administration (1905-07), World War One (1914-18) and the Liberation and Civil War in Mozambique left its impact on the local communities and their economy.

Nowadays the corridor is sparsely settled by the main ethnic groups of Udendeule, Ngoni and Yao, with the latter still having strong cross-border ties and relatives in the Niassa Reserve. All three ethnic groups still maintain to a certain extend their own culture which is expressed in their own language, music and dance. The common language is Swaheli and to a lesser extent English. Although the chiefdoms have been abolished years ago the chiefs

maintain their function of the spiritual and cultural leaders. The majority of the people are Muslims with few Christians.

Gravesites of ancient chiefs in Tanzania and Mozambique are still frequently visited by pilgrims. Up to date a few cultural historical sites were found, which might be of future interest; these include an old smelting site with remains of slag on Angecha Island in Ruvuma River, Nandanga Battlefields dating from World War I and Matawali Cave at Chingoli Table Mountain, a hide out during the Maji Maji War (1905/07).

The people of the communities are in general subsistence farmers based on shifting cultivation and the production of some cash crops like tobacco, cashew nut, sesame and to a certain extent the sale of rice and maize. Their lifestyle is adapted to the surrounding environment and natural resources supplying them with many things for their daily needs like medicinal plants, honey, beeswax, construction material, firewood, mushrooms, and wild fruits, fibers for baskets, mats, ropes and fish-traps and clay for pottery. Some people are specialized hunters and fishermen with excellent skills.

Beside some dairy cows there are no cattle because of trypanosomiasis. Instead people keep goats and poultry or produce fish in ponds for their protein needs.