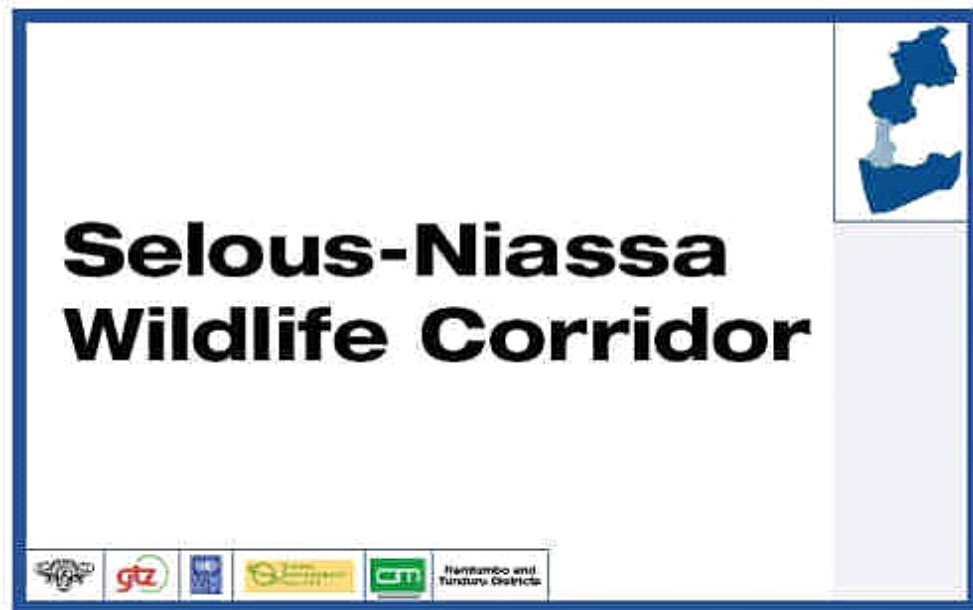




THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA  
Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism  
WILDLIFE DIVISION



**CROSS-BORDER COMMUTER & TRADING ROUTES IN THE  
SELOUS – NIASA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR**

**MARCH 2007**

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## List of Abbreviations

CID	Criminal Investigation Department
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GTZ-IS	Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit - International Services
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
HF	High Frequency
InWEnt	Institute for Capacity Building International, Germany
MZM	Mozambique Metical
NDC	Namtumbo District Council
NGR	Niassa Game Reserve
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGR	Selous Game Reserve
SNWC	Selous – Niassa Wildlife Corridor
TZS	Tanzania Shilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WMA	Wildlife Management Area

## **Acknowledgements**

Our sincere thanks go to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Wildlife Department and Namtumbo District Council for granting us the permission to work in the Selous Niassa Wildlife Corridor. In particular we thank the District Commissioner of Namtumbo District, Mr. Gabriel Gwabi Kimolo for his support and advice.

We are indebted to UNDP/GEF, who has provided the funding for this study and to InWent, Capacity Building International for facilitating the trans-boundary dialogue.

Special thanks to the District Executive Director of Namtumbo District, Mr. Willy J. Njau, and the Officer Commanding District, Mr. Mbise, who supported the study and made available the necessary personnel.

We express our appreciation to the study team for their excellent cooperation, Mr. J. Ngonyani, Sasawara Divisional Secretary, Mr. E. Ngonyani and Mr. H. Mwita, both CID officers, who collected and provided the necessary data on trading activities under the leadership of Mrs. B. Mbele, District Trade Officer.

We thank our unfailing team in the field, Mr. I. Ndomondo and D. Kalikumbi, both District Game Rangers, and the game scouts of the villages Matepwende, Msisima and Magazini under the leadership of District Game Officer, Mr. N. Madatta, for the tracking of the trading routes and data collection in the field.

This study reflects the opinions of the authors only. They may contain views which do not necessarily correspond with the official positions of the Wildlife Division, the United Nations Development Programme, Namtumbo and Tunduru District Councils, GTZ-IS or other cooperation partners

# TRADING AND COMMUTER ROUTES IN THE SELOUS-NIASSA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

By Ireneus N. Ngwatura and Rudolf Hahn

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor (SNWC), is a landscape of Miombo woodland linking the Selous Game Reserve (SGR) in Tanzania and the Niassa Game Reserve of Mozambique (NGR). The concept of its long-term protection is based on the promotion of community natural resources management while establishing a continuous network of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). This wildlife corridor will be managed by 29 communities, who will benefit from those conservation activities.

The Ruvuma River, the boundary between Tanzania and Mozambique, forms a 180 km interface between the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor in Tanzania and the Niassa Game Reserve of Mozambique.

Just as the SNWC links the wildlife between the two game reserves, the trans-frontier communities associated with the SNWC and Niassa Game Reserve have for a long time maintained socio-economic and cultural cooperation despite the political and administrative boundary.

Characteristic for the trans-frontier communities is a traditional way of communicating and carrying out trade on routes which are locally named “panja routes”. (Panja translated from Kiswahili means “mouse”, implying that there are unknown and unofficial routes crossing the border).

For the cross-border co-operation, according to the ratified “Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement” of the SADC Member States and the Management of Natural Resources, it is important to understand the dynamics associated with these routes and activities and their impact on conservation.

With this in mind, the Namtumbo District Council (NDC) in co-operation with the project “SNWC-UNDP/GEF implemented by GTZ-IS’ carried out a study in the southern section of the wildlife corridor. The summarised findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing cross-border activities. Recommendations are made in such a way that they assist the trans-frontier local communities and their livelihoods while mitigating some negative impact of commuting and trading on conservation and the effective establishment of the SNWC.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study was preceded by documentary research on the subject followed by field data collection.

The field data was collected in two steps:

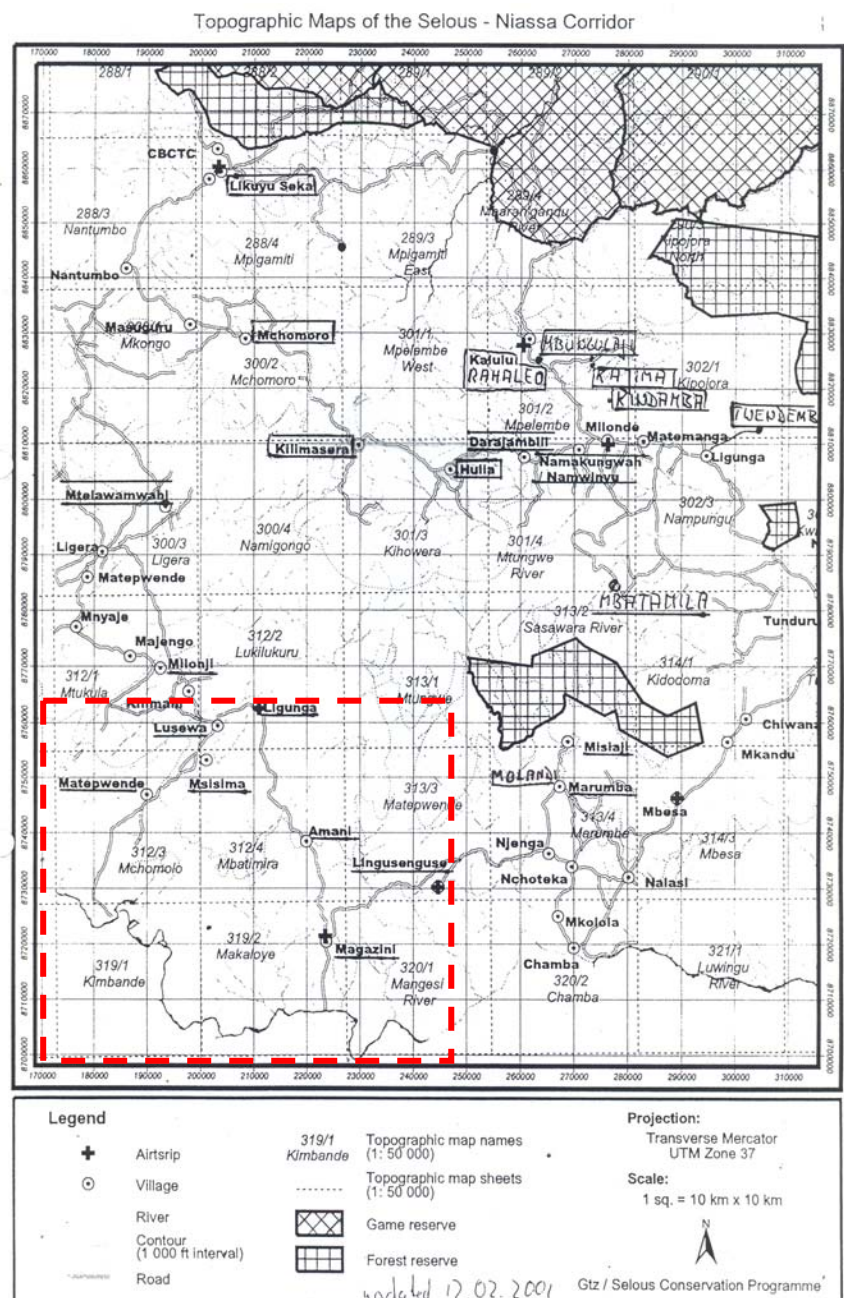
- 1) The project SNWC commissioned the task of data collection to a team of technicians under the supervision of the Namtumbo District Council Trade Officer. Methods included the questionnaires and direct interviews with administrative authorities, trading individuals in the area, in situ identification of market goods and services, site visits and intelligence services to identify illegal covert trading businesses.
- 2) A second team under the District Game Officer carried out the tracking of the trading routes and location of the crossing areas using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and satellite imagery maps. In addition, interviews with traders, fishermen, ferrymen and leaders of the settlements of Milepa added further information.

## **3. STUDY AREA**

The study was limited to Tanzanian territory and incorporated five villages namely Magazini, Amani, Lusewa, Msisima and Matepwende located in Sasawara Division of Namtumbo District in the southern part of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor. Their village land border Niassa Game Reserve in Mozambique. All the centres of the villages are accessible by road from the Songea, Namtumbo and Tunduru district headquarters most time of the year.

In Mozambique the trading routes are linked with the settlements of Milepa, Mkolesya and Mtwalo. They are located at the Ruvuma River within the Niassa Game Reserve and are connected by road with Mkalapa and the district headquarters Mavago.

Fig 1: Map of the Study area.



#### 4. TRANS-FRONTIER COMMUNITIES

<sup>1</sup>Two important ethnical groups inhabit the Ruvuma River trans-frontier area namely the Ngoni and Yao. The Ngoni migrated into the area in the 1840s, conquering the less administratively organised tribes of Nindi and Ndendeule. In 1945 Chief Mwenye Kwizombe of the Yao ethnic group bought the land between Lukimwa and Sasawara rivers, now Sasawara Division, from the Ngoni Chief Nkosi Zulu Xavery residing in Maposeni, Songea District. Soon, Yao people originating from Mozambique, nowadays Niassa Game Reserve, migrated into this unsettled area, thus forming the dominating ethnic group.

<sup>1</sup> SNWC, Socio – Economic Baseline Study 2006, by David Kaggi

<sup>2</sup>The settlement Mkolesya in Mozambique consists of about 11 families of Yao origin who migrated from the Sasawara Division, Tanzania in protest against the villagisation (Ujamaa) of 1974, but still having strong ties with the village Matepwendu. The settlement is named after Yao Chief Mkolesya. The same settlement divided later resulting in another settlement further upstream of Ruvuma River, named after Chief Mtwalo.

During the civil war in Mozambique thousands of people took shelter in large refugee camps in Namtumbo District. Most refugees migrated back to Mozambique in 1992 leaving a number of people residing in Tanzania.

Most important to note is that there have been uninterrupted relationships between the trans-frontier communities along Ruvuma River. These relations are deeply cemented on kinship, marriages, culture and informal trade.

## **5. GOVERNANCE**

Although the trans-frontier communities of the two sovereign states are ethnically of the same origin and demonstrate a well established informal trading partnership, there is no official organ to ascertain internationally acceptable good governance.

Important services such as immigration and customs posts are not available in both countries within the study area. In both countries the responsibility of maintaining law and order rests on the respective village governments supervised by the Ward Executive Officers and Divisional Secretary. There was evidence of some cross-border trading levy being collected in Magazini village, but its legality is questionable.

## **6. REGULAR COMMUTERS AND TRADERS**

Commuters and traders are actively engaged in cross-border exchange of goods and services using several routes within the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor. From Tanzania seventy one (71) individuals regularly utilise the routes from Tanzania to Mozambique<sup>3</sup>, while twenty seven (27) Mozambican individuals frequently visit Tanzania on informal trading missions<sup>4</sup>. As shown in table 1 and 2 the commuter and trading activity is a male dominated business, both for Tanzania and Mozambique. Names of regular commuters and traders traversing in SNWC are known, and treated confidential.

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<sup>2</sup> R.Hahn, N. Madatta pers. comm. SNWC unpublished field report about tracking of the commuter/trading routes in 2006

<sup>3</sup> Table 1: Origin of commuters and traders from Tanzania to Mozambique

<sup>4</sup> Table 2: Destinations and number of Mozambican commuters and traders

Ward	Village	Hamlet	No. (Male)	No. (Female)	Total
Magazini	Magazini	1. Kutulika	5	0	5
		2. Majengo	3	0	3
		3. Magazini	7	0	7
		4. Tupendane	5	0	5
		5. Mwenge	3	0	3
		6. Muungano	3	0	3
		7. Sisikwasisi	1	0	1
Lusewa	Amani		22	8	30
	Lusewa		4	0	4
	Msisima		5	0	5
	Matepwende		5	0	5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>71</b>

Source: Office of Sasawara Divisional Secretary, Namtumbo District, Tanzania.  
Actual names in hand script withheld.

**Table 1:** Origin and number of commuters/ traders from Tanzania to Mozambique.

Ward	Village	Hamlet	No. (Male)	No. (Female)	Total
Magazini	Magazini	1. Kutulika and Majengo	13	0	13
		2. Magazine	5	0	5
		3. Tupendane	1	1	2
		4. Muungano	1	0	1
	Amani		6	0	6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>

Source: Office of Sasawara Divisional Secretary, Namtumbo District, Tanzania. Actual names in hand script withheld.

**Table 2:** Number and destinations of commuters/ traders from Mozambique to Tanzania.

## 7. TRADED COMMODITIES

From the respondents questionnaires it was recognised that twenty one (21) different commodities are prevalent in the informal trade within the study area. Table 3 indicates the commodities mentioned. Seventy four percent of the overt goods include bicycles, textiles, mattress, aluminium products, solar units, plastic buckets and radio cassette sets.

A crosscheck with results from other methods of data collection revealed that a number of items were not mentioned, but are also traded. These are: Fresh water fish from Ruvuma and its feeder rivers, saw blades for pit sawing and medical drugs.

The trading with hardwood originating from Mozambique as already observed in Tunduru and Songea Districts was not reported for Namtumbo District.

Illegal commodities in the informal trade include narcotic drugs, arms and ammunition, gun powder for muzzle loaders, smoked bush meat, elephant ivory and some precious minerals.

Item No	Description of Goods traded	Frequencies recorded in questionnaires	Percentage	Σ%
1	Bicycles	14	21.21	
2	Textiles (Vitenges)	9	13.63	
3	Mattresses	7	10.60	
4	Aluminium products	5	7.57	
5	Solar panel	5	7.57	
6	Plastic buckets	4	6.05	
7	Radio cassette sets	3	4.54	
8	Bicycles spare parts	2	3.03	74.2 %
9	Sewing Machine	2	3.03	
10	Watches	2	3.03	
11	Salt (kitchen)	2	3.03	
12	Blankets	2	3.03	12.12 %
13	Black gun powder	1	1.52	
14	Edible oil	1	1.52	
15	Kerosene	1	1.52	
16	Diesel	1	1.52	
17	Milling machine	1	1.52	
18	Other household items	1	1.52	
19	Skin soothing cream	1	1.52	
20	Sun dried sardines (dagaa) from Lake Victoria	1	1.52	
21	Kitchen plates	1	1.52	13.68 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>		100 %

Source: SNWC trading report 2006, District Trade Officer Namtumbo

**Table 3:** Most common trade goods.

## 8. COMMODITIES EXPORTED FROM TANZANIA TO MOZAMBIQUE

Eleven trade goods with price list and gross profit margin are shown on table 4. The cash value for each traded item is indicated in both Tanzanian currency (Tanzanian Shilling, TZS) and Mozambican currency (Metical, MZM). At the time of the study in 2006 the exchange rate was; 1 TZS = 5 MZM.

The gross percentage of profit for goods exported from Tanzania to Mozambique ranged between 14% to > 300% with an average gross profit exceeding 90%. A 50kg bag of sardine fish (dagaa) from Lake Victoria realised the highest profit margin of over 316 %. The trading transactions are carried out as barter trade or in cash.

Data on volume of trade could not be obtained thus leaving the total annual value of goods exported to Mozambique unknown. Big profit margins without paying taxes make the cross-border trading lucrative.

Item No.	Description of Commodity	Value Tsh	Value MZM	Gross profit Tsh	% Gross Profit
1	Mattresses size 31/2 x 6 x 6 (ft)	40,000	300,000	20,000	50.00
2	Mattresses size 6 x 6 x 6 (ft)	75,000	500,000	25,000	33.33
3	Pots (one dozen)	40,000	250,000	10,000	25.00
4	Petroleum jelly (Doz)	4,000	30,000	2,000	50.00
5	Sardines from Mwanza/50kgs (dagaa)	48,000	1,000,000	152,000	316.67
6	Mosquito nets	3,500	8,000	500	14.28
7	Textiles (Vitenge/pairs)	3,000	30,000	3,000	100.00
8	Radios 3 band	30,000	100,000	20,000	66.67
9	Radios cassette 4 band	65,000	400,000	15,000	23.08
10	Plastic buckets	2,000	40,000	6,000	300.00
11	Hand hoes	2,500	30,000	3,500	140.00

Source: SNWC trading report 2006, District Trade Officer Namtumbo (Exchange rate 1TSH=5MZM)

**Table 4:** Profit margin of some commodities exported from Tanzania to Mozambique.

## 9. TRADING GOODS IMPORTED TO TANZANIA FROM MOZAMBIQUE

Commodities and their value imported from Mozambique into Tanzania are indicated in table 5. They are limited to bicycles, solar power panels, motor cycles, and spirits. The actual prices before retail were not known at the time of the study.

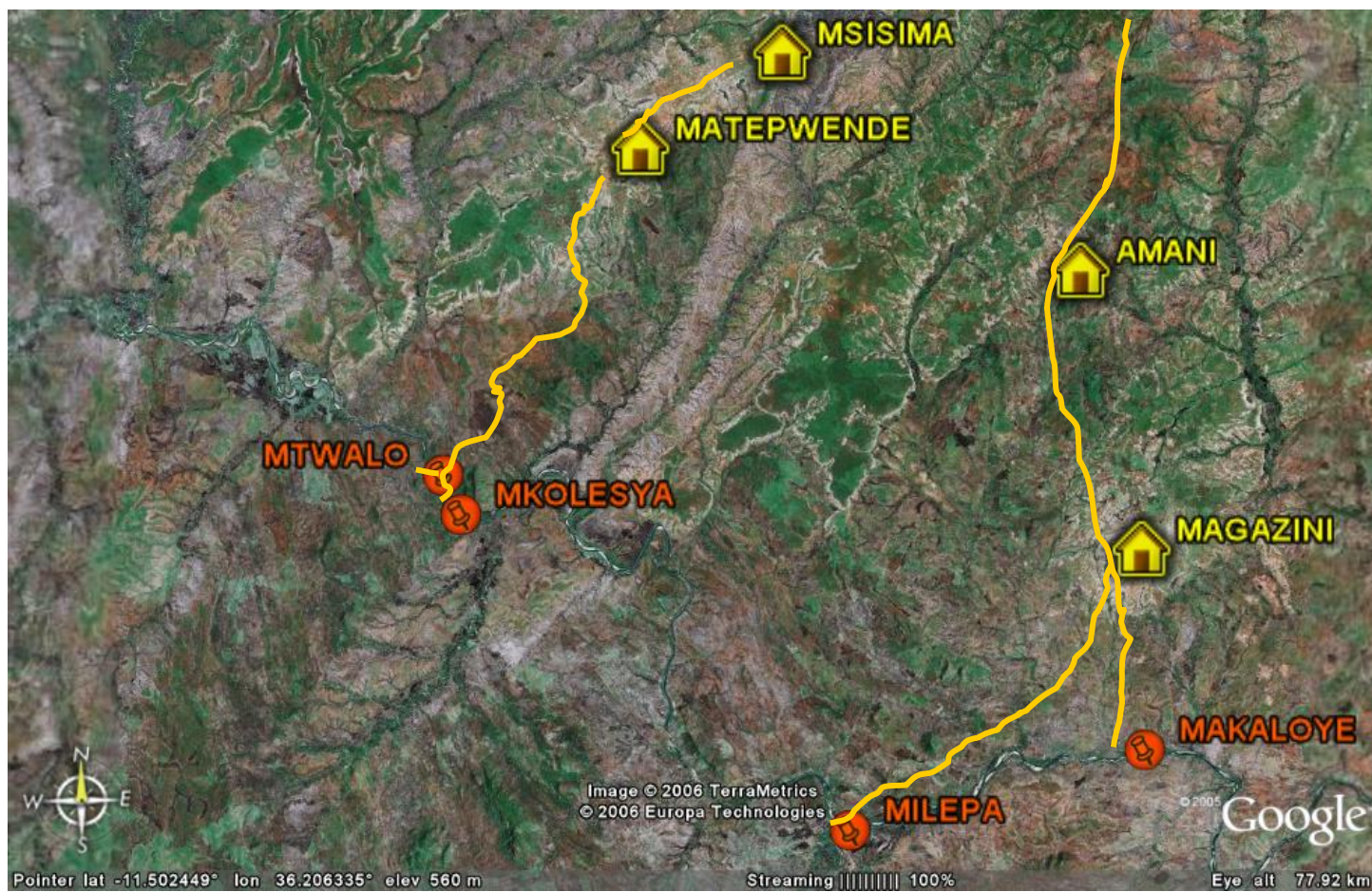
The table excludes clandestine trade in arms, ammunition, bush meat, timber, precious minerals and ivory, between the border of Tanzania and Mozambique.

SN	Commodity Description	Price List (Tsh)
1	Bicycles (Balloon)	70,000
2	Bicycles (Sport)	80,000
3	Solar Power Panel (Solar Africa)	120,000
4	Solar Power Panel (BP Solar)	400,000
5	Motor cycle (New Baja)	1,600,000
6	Motor cycle (Yamaha)	1,400,000
7	XL Honda	1,200,000
8	Spirits (Travergin)	12,000@ cartoon

Source: SNWC trading report 2006, District Trade Officer Namtumbo (Exchange rate 1TSH=5MZM)

**Table 5:** Retail price list of some commodities of Mozambique imported from Tanzania.

Fig. 2: Satellite imagery map of Cross-border Commuter / Trading Routes within Namtumbo District & Selous - Niassa Wildlife Corridor



## 10. COMMUTER AND TRADING ROUTES WITHIN THE SELOUS – NIASA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Although it is not in the scope of this study, it is important to mention the Commuter and Trading Routes leading to the study area. The trading goods origin as far as Dar es Salaam and are transported by bus to Songea, then by pick-up, bicycle or foot to the border.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor three major commuter and trading routes were identified in the field using GPS methods. These routes are identified on satellite imagery, Fig 2, showing major crossing points on the Ruvuma River and Mozambique border. These routes are described in more detail below.

Photographs were taken at the major crossing points at Ruvuma River, the border with Mozambique.



**Fig 3: District game ranger tracking trading routes with GPS.**

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<sup>5</sup> District Game Officer Nantumbo, Mr. Madatta pers. comm. after an interview of traders in Mecula, Mozambique in 2002

**Route 1: Matepwende village, Tanzania to Mkolesya and Mtwalo settlements in Mozambique**

The route commences in Matepwende village, Sasawara Division, Tanzania and leads to the Ruvuma River crossing at Mkolesya settlement in the Niassa Game Reserve Mozambique.

The total length of the route is 26.7 km. Four wheel motor vehicles can use this route during the dry season. At the Ruvuma River the route crosses several small islands, which is only possible on foot or with bicycles. A person from Mkolesya ferries people and goods by using a dugout canoe. He charges a fee for his services.

The Mtwalo settlement is located a few kilometres upstream from Mkolesya on the Ruvuma River, within the Niassa Game Reserve in Mozambique. It can be reached only by using a dug out ferry service.

In Mozambique a service/hunting road connects both settlements with the Milepa settlement and another major road leads to Mkalapa and Mavago, the District Capital.

Other foot and bicycle paths connect Matepwende village with Magwamira village in Songea District, then to Mitomoni village in Mbinga District and crossing the Ruvuma River to Secundo Congresso in Mozambique. Cross border trade and traffic are taking place throughout the year.

Most commuters and traders usually travel in groups of three to fifteen individuals and use a number of resting points on their way. The major river stopping and resting points are Mkonesi, Mkowe, Luchilinko, Mbuyuni and Mkalapa.



**Fig 4: Ruvuma River crossing to Mkolesya**

**Route 2:   Magazini village, Tanzania to Makaloye (former customs checkpoint in Tanzania)**

This route starts from Magazini village and reaches Makaloye after 19 km. Makaloye was the former custom checkpoint on the Ruvuma River. This place was used for ferrying war refugees between Tanzania and Mozambique in the nineties. There are no settlements on either side of the river.

During the dry season Makaloye can be reached by lorry, where passengers and goods are then ferried in dugout canoes. This service is rendered by fishermen, who can be called when the need arises. The road continues in the Niassa Game Reserve in Mozambique and connects with Milepa settlement and the Mavago district headquarters.

The transport of goods in Mozambique is either carried out with bicycles or a vehicle can be called via a HF radio based in the Milepa settlement. This route is mostly used for larger quantities of goods which require to be transported by road from either side.



**Fig 5: Family on the way to Mavago crossing Ruvuma River at Makaloye with dug outs.**

### Route 3: Magazini village, Tanzania to Milepa settlement in Mozambique

The route is a trail starting in Magazini village, Tanzania and connecting with Milepa settlement in Niassa Game Reserve, Mozambique. The total length of this trail is 28.3 km and can be negotiated by bicycle or by foot. Travelling on foot is prevalent but bicycles are the main means of transport.

Milepa, located at the confluence of the Ruvuma and Lucheringo Rivers, is a settlement of approximately 400 people with two border policemen, a ward executive secretary, one doctor, one teacher and a sheik. A major road connects the settlement with the District Capital Mavago.

Commuters and traders usually travel in groups of three to fifteen. On the Magazini-Milepa route the permanent stopping and resting points include Kibanga - Kivukoni, Milepa, Liwalesi, Mavagosede, Chikonono and Lichinga.

This route leads for at least 15 km parallel to the Ruvuma River on the Tanzanian side, passing through sensitive wildlife ecological areas of high future tourism potential. Similarly the route cuts the water-source from other crucial habitats such as wetlands and forests thus disturbing wildlife in the corridor.

### Ruvuma Ferry Services

A well established ferry service assists the travellers to cross Ruvuma River with dug-out canoes. An official price list (translated from fig 6) announces the available services; refer to table 6 below.

<b>NOTICE</b>		
<b>Price list for ferrying people and goods</b>		
Mattress	2000 TSH	<b>Warning to travellers:</b> 1. Take care of your luggage while on land and on water  2. Travellers are supposed to cater for themselves  3. Pilferage or stealing prohibited
50 kg gunny bag	2000 TSH	
Bale of second hand clothes	2000 TSH	
Bicycle	1000 TSH	
Livestock	2000 TSH	
Saw blade (pit sawing)	1000 TSH	
Dozen of aluminium pots	1000 TSH	
Passenger	1000 TSH	
Bicycle levy	1000 TSH	

Source: Translated from photo taken in 2006

**Table 6:** Pricelist for ferry services at Ruvuma River crossing to Milepa



**Fig 6: Pricelist for Ruvuma ferry services at Milepa crossing.**



**Fig 7: Ruvuma River crossing to Milepa.**

## 11. THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CROSS-BORDER COMMUTING AND TRADING ON CONSERVATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SNWC

Presently the border between Tanzania and Mozambique is porous and trade as well as commuter activities between both countries are not controlled. Beside the main trading routes described in this report other minor routes exist.

The trade in wildlife products, whether its bush-meat, ivory or other valuable parts depletes not only the wildlife populations to the point of no recovery and loss of species and biodiversity in both countries. It also prevents any eco-tourism developments within the planned or existing conservation areas.

Furthermore, the trade with firearms, ammunition and gunpowder exasperate this process, leaving a negative impact on areas as far as the Selous Game Reserve.

Law enforcement activities are rather difficult, because people actually can cross at any given point from one country to the other and thus escape any prosecution.

It is noted that the routes from the Magazini village in Tanzania to the Milepa settlement in Mozambique follows the Ruvuma river for almost half its length. (Refer to Fig. 8.)

Evaluating the questionnaires, travellers observed the following species on this route: African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), Common water buck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), greater kudu (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) and hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). There were also signs or tracks indicating the presence of African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), common duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), Roosevelt's sable (*Hippotragus Niger roosevelti*), lion (*Panthera Leo*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Selous zebra (*Equus boehms selous*), common eland (*Tragelaphus Traurotragus oryx*) and wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*).

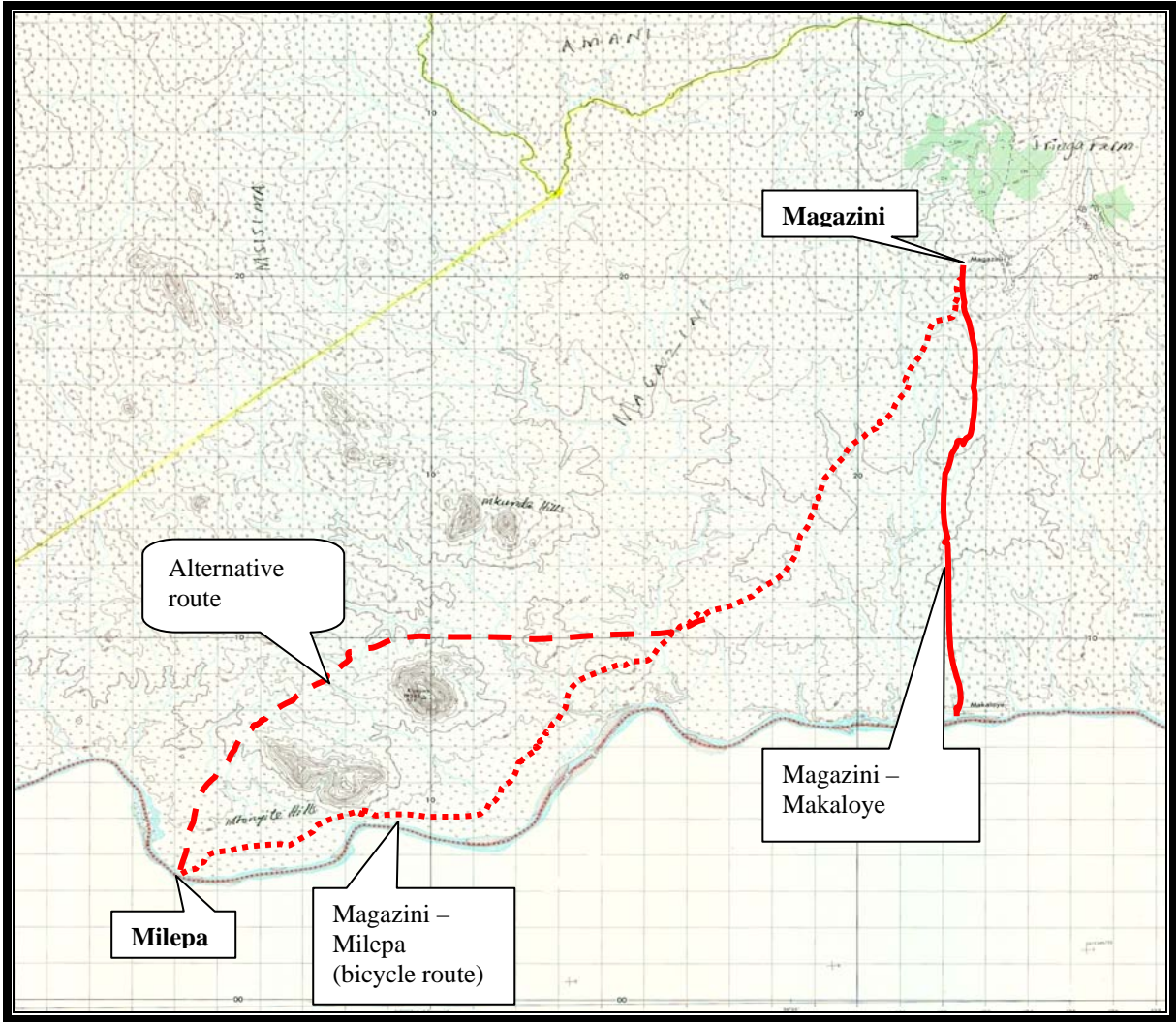
It is thus surmised that the route leads through sensitive wildlife ecological areas and wetlands of high potential for future tourist development.

The permanent movement of people does not only disturb the movements of wildlife between the water source Ruvuma River and adjacent forests and wetlands, it also increases the danger of travellers being attacked and injured or even killed.

An alternative route, plotted on map Fig 8, leading around the hills of Kipajura and Mtonyole would improve the safety of the travellers and would also have less negative impact on the environment and tourism development.

In general the cross-border trade and migration has a negative ecological impact on the further development of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor.

**Fig. 8: Map of Commuter / Trading Routes Magazini - Milepa and Magazini, Makaloye**



## 12. DISCUSSION

The in depth study of commuting and trading activities at the interface between the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor and Mozambique revealed:

That the relationship between trans-frontier communities along the Ruvuma River is cemented on kinship, culture and informal trade.

As the commuting and trading cross-border is informal the annual volume of trade goods and their monetary value can not be determined.

The communities involved accrue a number of social-economic benefits, which include the maintenance of their traditional linkages, the provision of necessary commodities and services and the creation of jobs and economical advantages.

In essence the trading activities are at grass-root level and well established. Although the trading activities are a lucrative business, the commuters / traders are taking a great risk of being attacked by dangerous wildlife or drowning while crossing Ruvuma River with dug-out canoes.

The ferry services are not very reliable and safe in particular during the rainy season. The degree of risks might be the reason for the insignificant number of women involved in trading activities.

Two bridges, Unity Bridge I and Unity Bridge II located at Masuguru and Mitomoni respectively, are under construction or in the planning process. At this stage it is difficult to foresee their impact on the trading volume between the districts Namtumbo and Mavago. But due to the remoteness and lack of infrastructure of the mentioned settlements trading will continue.

The cross-border commuting and trading activities are informal. Also as neither immigration nor custom services are available both Governments loose revenue. The porous border does not allow determining whether people crossing the border are bona fide citizens of the respective countries. Lack of policing also results in peace and security of both human life and property threatened.

The actual situation of uncontrolled border crossing and trading with illegal commodities as mentioned in the previous chapter has a rather negative impact on the establishment of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor. The overexploitation of wildlife resulting from this situation does presently not allow for eco-tourism development and thus prevents also the economic development of the communities and the districts in Tanzania.

### **13. CONCLUSION**

The existence of a natural linkage between the wildlife in the Selous Game Reserve and Niassa Game Reserve is scientifically known. The trans-frontier local communities associated with the Ruvuma riparian region in the SNWC and Niassa game reserve have maintained their traditional linkages with respect to socio-economic and cultural parameters. The linkages have persisted with time irrespective of the political boundary separating the two countries.

In order to control and concentrate the cross-border commuter and trading activities and prevent further negative impact on conservation and related economic developments only two official commuter and trading routes should be permitted. Those could be the route Matepwendé - Mkolesya/Mtwalo and the route Magazini - Milepa.

According to the results of this study the route Magazini - Milepa constitutes the most frequented route to Mozambique within the SNWC and Namtumbo District.

### **14. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Trading and commuting between both countries are of such socio - economic importance that it should be officially recognised and formalised. As the entire commuting and trading system is grass-root based it is recommendable that the trans-frontier communities should play a key-role in the process of the formulation.

The conversion of the existing bicycle trail/footpath to a light vehicle road and the installation of a ferryboat for passengers and their goods at Milepa would improve the safety of the travellers and trading activities. The new road could be constructed following the recommended route as outlined in the map of Fig 8. This would reduce and mitigate the negative impact on conservation and tourism developments.

The establishment of an immigration and customs border post at Magazini village would be recommendable to render the necessary services.

This study and its results and recommendations are limited to the Tanzanian Territory. Therefore it would be necessary to share this information with the Mozambican Authorities and the Management of the Niassa Game Reserve in order to seek discussion on an acceptable solution for this cross-border issue.

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