

DEVELOPMENT OF KEY PROTECTED AREAS IN MALAWI

2023 IMPACT REPORT

An overview of support provided by Peace Parks Foundation



Submitted by



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INTRODUCTION

Since 2003, Peace Parks Foundation has played a key role in the development of the Malawi-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA). Following a study conducted by Peace Parks, the governments of Malawi and Zambia began exploring the establishment of a Transfrontier Conservation Area along their shared border. In 2004, an international coordinator was appointed to lead the process, resulting in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that same year. From 2004 to 2014, Peace Parks facilitated ongoing collaboration between the two countries to develop the draft treaty and implementation framework, culminating in the signing of the bilateral treaty in 2015. Since 2017, Peace Parks has served as the implementing agent for KfW funding for the transboundary landscape.

The year 2023 marked a pivotal moment for our activities and partnerships in Malawi. This year saw the signing of a 20-year co-management agreement between the Malawi government and Peace Parks for the sustainable management of Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. It also witnessed the launch of a crucial water scheme connecting Nyika and Vwaza, which will significantly enhance both conservation and community development. Additionally, 2023 brought the implementation of a groundbreaking Human-Wildlife Co-existence Management Scheme that places communities at the heart of its implementation. Finally, the fruits of an important Law Enforcement Risk Assessment (LERA) were realised, translating into actionable measures that strengthen the protection of these vital conservation areas.

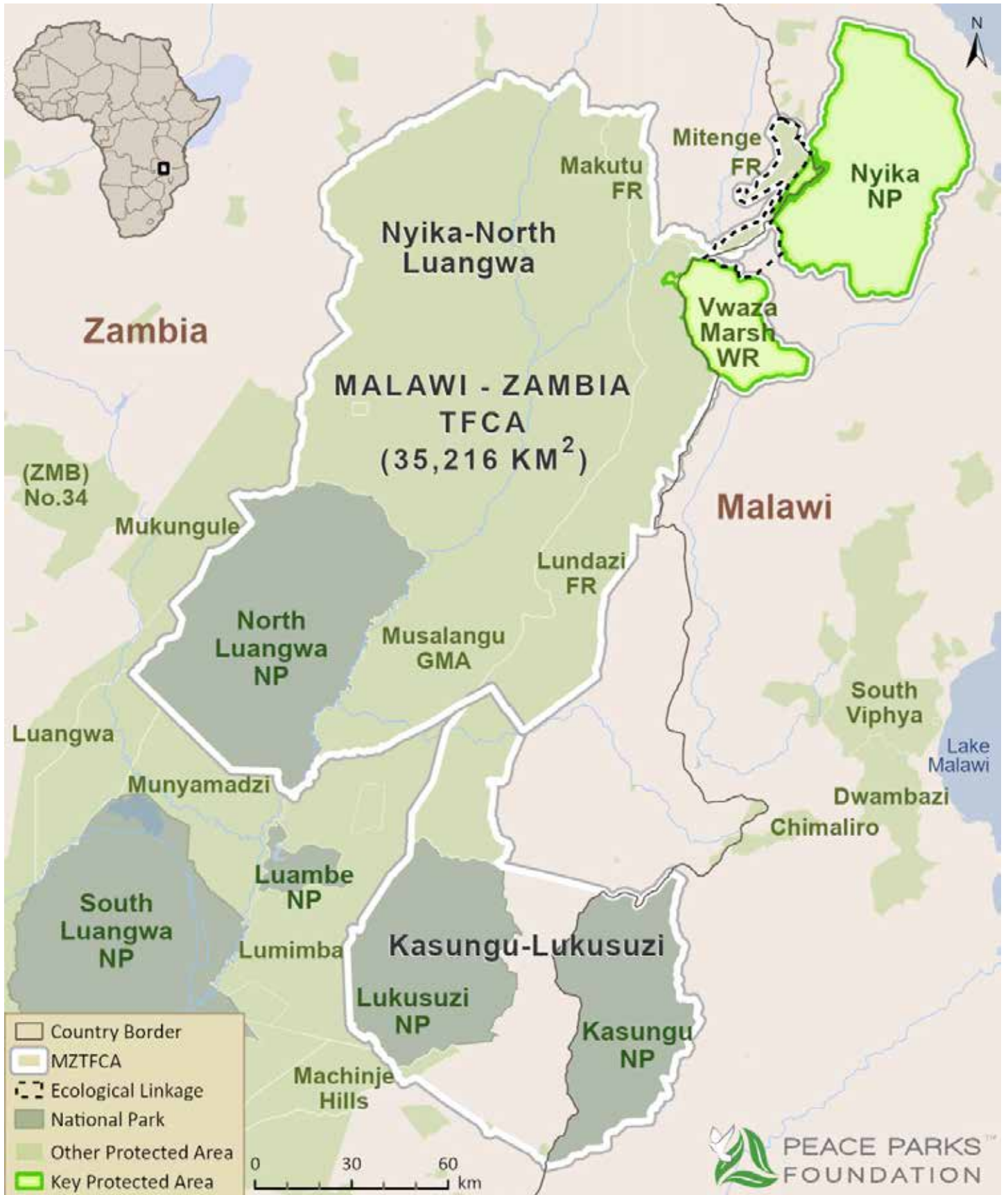


Signing ceremony for the co-management agreement

Malawi's Ministry of Tourism, and Peace Parks signed on 6 June 2023, a ground-breaking 20-year co-management agreement to secure the long-term protection and sustainability of Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. The signature took place in the presence of His Excellency Dr. Lazarus Mc Carthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, and His Excellency President Joaquim Chissano, Vice-Chairman of Peace Parks Foundation's Board of Directors. Under the co-management agreement, the Government of Malawi, through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and Peace Parks Foundation will establish an independent Trust with an ensuing mission to balance both conservation and local development. It will do so by managing the two protected areas as one landscape, adopting a business-like mindset and inclusive innovative governance. This governance structure will rely on a Board of Trustees, composed of representatives from the government, districts, communities, private sector, and Peace Parks, to provide strategic guidance. The implementation will be managed by a strong Park Management Unit, led by a CEO.



KEY PROTECTED AREAS SUPPORTED BY PEACE PARKS



HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

A total of 176 personnel are employed in Malawi's Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Peace Parks supports 19 (10%) of salaries in these parks. All Peace Parks supported staff are Malawian but one.

In 2023, a particular effort was provided by DNPW and Peace Parks to increase the law enforcement capacity of the two protected areas. DNPW recruited 26 new rangers in Nyika (16) and Vwaza (6) while Peace Parks recruited 13 community rangers who joined the rapid response unit in Nyika.

Sixty-three community members were employed in Nyika and Vwaza in cash for work programmes for invasive plants and fire management. In parallel, 66 fence attendants have been recruited and trained.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Our goal, in partnership with the Malawian government, is to establish Nyika and Vwaza as flagship models of coexistence. As such, communities are at the heart of all developments within the landscape:

- Two community representatives will serve on the board of the future Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust.
- A state-of-the-art Human-Wildlife Coexistence Scheme has been developed in Nyika and Vwaza. Communities are both benefiting from and leading the scheme. They were involved in the design of the 110 km of solar-powered fences erected around Vwaza and Nyika. They now participate in their management and maintenance. They are trained and organised to effectively manage human-wildlife conflicts. Additionally, a grievance mechanism is being developed to address their concerns.
- Communities have managed access to the natural resources of the two protected areas. A five kilometer resource use strip has been delineated within each protected area. In 2023, a total of 2 743 resource users participated in the resource harvesting programme, with the combined economic value of the harvested resources amounting to MK 14 458 706 (approximately USD 13 598).
- Communities are the direct beneficiaries of a water scheme from Nyika to Vwaza, which will provide access to potable water for 18 000 people by 2024, expanding to 33 000 once the network is fully extended.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In 2023, Peace Parks' financial support to Nyika and Vwaza exceeded EUR 4.3 m from the following donors: KfW and the COmON Foundation. The 2024 projected budget of EUR 2.2 m is targeted for the management and development of these areas.

Peace Parks has been working on multiple fundraising tracks on the shorter and longer term: Legacy Landscape Fund, KfW Phase 2, IMS Foundation, Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, NPL.

	Total									
	pre-2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Salaries	384 132	28 681	76 751	123 599	157 339	195 216	507 363	402 321	136 177	2 011 578
Operational costs	403 347	31 020	78 111	196 615	179 295	208 949	1 146 238	856 386	666 302	3 766 263
Capital investments	91 292	421	141 096	149 674	355 665	232 830	1 482 362	1 150 470	822 590	4 426 401
Conservation management	219 461	9 761	238 095	86 136	82 352	66 185	3 033	127 512	188 151	1 020 686
Protection programme	57 430	-	14 950	87 137	138 904	136 735	197 034	234 774	153 979	1 020 944
Community programme	3 147	-	31 407	276 444	319 667	351 335	344 960	603 089	2 335 135	4 265 185
Tourism programme	4 060	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 089
Administration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contingency	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1 162 870	69 912	580 411	919 605	1 233 222	1 191 251	3 680 990	3 374 552	4 302 334	16 515 146



MALAWI-ZAMBIA TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA



MALAWI-ZAMBIA TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA

ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

- The review of the general management plans for Nyika National Park and Vwaza Wildlife Reserve was completed in September 2023 following peer reviews of the two plans by various stakeholders including DNPW, District Councils, KfW and the communities. The plans have since been approved by the Ministry of Tourism.
- The partnerships, long term vision and innovative governance were promoted on both side of the border with Frankfurt Zoological Society signing a 20 year co-management agreement for North Langwua with the Zambian Government and Peace Parks signing a 20 years co-management agreement for Nyika and Vwaza with the Malawian government.
- A road map to establish and develop the Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust has been jointly approved by Peace Parks and DNPW Malawi.
- Collaborative efforts with Zambia were strengthened, particularly in the area of law enforcement and wildlife monitoring. Discussions were held regarding a joint collaring programme to track and manage elephant movements across the border, aimed at better understanding and mitigating human-wildlife conflicts.

PRIORITY PLANNING 2024

- Hand over remaining activities in Chama block to DNPW Zambia and Frankfurt Zoological Society.
- Develop a joint programme with Frankfurt Zoological Society to support transfrontier activities in partnership with DNPW Malawi and DNPW Zambia.
- Conclude the Nyika Vwaza Water Scheme work and make sure the two water user associations are capacitated to manage the infrastructure.
- Continue the current community livelihood programme around Nyika and Vwaza in Malawi.
- Organise the first meeting of the Nyika Vwaza Co-management Trust and register the Trust.
- Recruit the CEO and HR manager of the future co-management unit.
- Secure fundraising to support the next five years of operation of the Trust.
- Initiate a capacity building programme to develop the team and processes of the Trust.
- Initiate an update of the vision and strategic business plan for the landscape.



NYIKA NATIONAL PARK



NYIKA NATIONAL PARK

Expenditure: The total expenditure for Nyika National Park in 2023 was EUR 2 160 826.
Employment: 117 (Total) / 15 (Peace Parks donor funded)

ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

Infrastructure Development

- By the end of 2023, the park had rehabilitated 105 out of 108 staff houses (97% completion rate). Road maintenance included reshaping 4km of road and repairing 14 damaged spots.
- The major infrastructure undertaking in 2023 was the commencement of the construction of the Nyika Vwaza Water Scheme. Around 33 000 people will ultimately access potable water once the project is completed. Fifty percent of the construction work was finished by the end of the year.
- An official launch of the works was organised in April 2023 in the presence of the Minister of Tourism, Honourable Vera Kamtukule on 20th April 2023. The launch was graced by various stakeholders including officials from Rumphu and Mzimba district councils, traditional leaders, local politicians and the surrounding beneficiary communities. It highlighted the direct link between the water tower role of Nyika and the need to preserve its ecosystem to protect the supply of water to surrounding communities.



The launch of the water project: the Minister of Tourism being taken through the designs and project scope. On the right is the billboard displaying summary information for the project.



Work in progress – excavation of trenches for pipes.

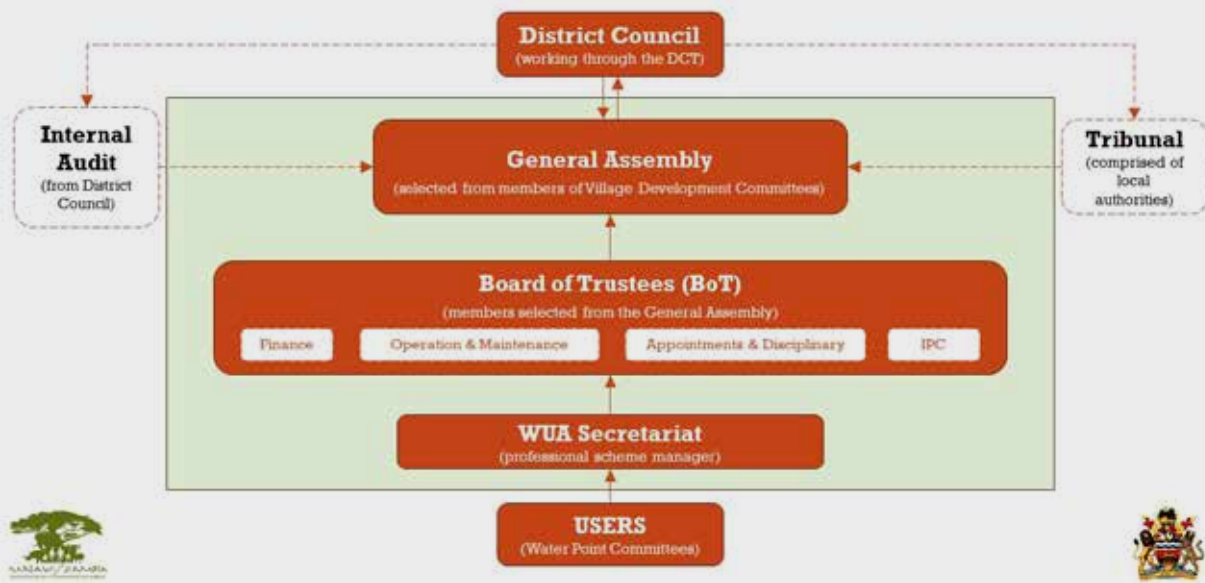




Work in progress at Nyika Vwaza treatment site.

- In parallel, two water user associations were created in Rumpi and Mzimba districts. Their role will be to manage and maintain the water scheme.

NYIKA VWAZA GRAVITY FED SYSTEM - WATER USER ASSOCIATION FORMATION



Water users association adopted structure.



- By the end of 2023, progress in purchasing road maintenance equipment for Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve included the full delivery of two tractors with tipping trailers and two grass slashers. A single drum vibrator roller and a backhoe loader were also delivered. A motor grader and water bowser are still to be delivered, due to importation challenges caused by exchange shortages. This led to revised contracts that allowed payments per item supplied to facilitate the procurement of the outstanding machinery.

ANTI-POACHING AND PROTECTION

- One hundred and ninety-one long patrols were conducted out of 262 planned patrols, resulting in a 73% execution rate. A total of 296 short patrols were conducted out of 249 planned, resulting in a 119% execution rate. The annual patrol coverage stood at 47%, which is below the target of 80% and slightly decreased from 2022's 57% coverage rate.

Parameters	2023			2022			2022	% change
	Jan-June	July-Dec	TOTAL	Jan-June	July-Dec	TOTAL		
Long patrols planned	144	143	287	124	138	262	287	-9
Long patrols effected	132	97	229	85	106	191	229	-17
Short patrols planned	41	167	208	115	134	249	208	20
Short patrols effected	106	249	355	149	147	296	355	-17
Person days planned	4 208	3 656	7 864	3 132	3 422	6 554	7 864	-17
Person days effected	3 780	2 589	6 369	2 298	2 855	5 153	6 297	-18
Number of patrollers	35	33	68	30	40	70	68	3

- A total of 1 255 illegal activities were encountered throughout the year. There was a significant increase in illegal activities during the first half of the year (33%) compared to 2022. However, the overall number of illegal activities declined by 46% in the latter half, driven by a sharp decline of 313% in wire snare removals.
- A total of 58 convictions were registered, all resulting in custodial sentences. The conviction rate remained strong, with an increase from 90% in the first half to 100% in the second half.
- Sixteen new rangers were recruited by DNPW as well as 13 new community rangers that follow the same training as the government counterparts, significantly boosting Nyika law enforcement capabilities.
- In 2023, Nyika National Park focused on implementing recommendations from a law enforcement assessment to improve law enforcement effectiveness and safety. Key actions included developing and applying new standard operating procedures for critical areas such as use of force, incident reporting, and firearms handling. The park also conducted training sessions for rangers to ensure adherence to these standard operating procedures and established a monitoring system to evaluate the effectiveness of law enforcement operations.

SPECIFIC FOCUS ON HELICOPTER PROOF OF CONCEPT

A Bell Jetranger, was tested to assess the viability of a helicopter to support law enforcement and counter-poaching efforts, as well as veterinary assistance, within Nyika National Park. It also enabled assessment for suitability to Nyika conditions.

Over 28 days of intensive activity, the use of a helicopter for rapid deployment, combined with well-placed ranger observation points, a rapid reaction unit, and K9 support, proved essential in disrupting poacher incursions into the park. The helicopter's unpredictable movements played a significant role in deterring poachers, as evidenced by a sudden reduction in fires and movement on the plateau.

A monthly average of 30 rangers conducted 159 patrols, totaling 17 582 patrol hours, including 36.5 aerial patrol hours. The teams successfully disrupted 22 armed groups, arrested 18 poachers (all of whom were convicted), confiscated nine firearms, and dismantled 42 wire snares.



CONSERVATION AND REWILDING

- Invasives: A total of 205 hectares were cleared throughout the year, with 155 hectares using COVID-19 support funds and 50 hectares cleared through timber sawing for project infrastructure and community desk production.
- Fire management: Nyika recruited 30 community members and managed to clear 44 kilometres of firebreaks in 2023, compared to 37km in 2022 during the same period. The early patch burning covered 52% of the park and plateau area.



Clearing of self-sown pines

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Nyika National Park received a total of 689 paying visitors in 2023. This marks a 16% decrease in the first half of the year and a 28% decrease in the second half compared to 2022. The decline in visitor numbers can be attributed to reduced accessibility, as the main road deteriorated due to heavy and prolonged rains caused by Cyclone Freddy early 2023 and the passage of heavy-duty trucks.
- In the same period a revenue of USD 13 991.95 was generated representing a slight increase from 2022.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Activities focused on improving community livelihoods through targeted interventions in agriculture, livestock, and resource utilisation.

- **Livestock production:** The pass-on livestock programme benefited 590 households, with 352 households receiving chickens and 238 receiving goats. This programme was supported by a drug revolving fund and vaccination campaign to ensure high survival rates.
- **High-value crops:** The programme supported 1 706 households in the cultivation of high-value crops such as soybeans and groundnuts, yielding a total of 620 metric tons. The seed pass-on rate was 88.5%, indicating strong community participation and the effectiveness of the programme.
- **Beekeeping:** Beekeeping initiatives were expanded with the distribution of 111 beehives to 10 communities, resulting in the harvest of approximately 1 234 kg of honey. This initiative provided an additional income source for the communities involved.
- **Resource utilisation:** The park facilitated the harvesting of various natural resources, including fish, mushrooms, and thatch grass, by 1 223 resource users. The total economic value of the resources harvested was estimated at MK 6 912 600 (USD 6 373).
- **Community engagement and awareness:** Nyika National Park conducted 592 environmental awareness and conflict resolution meetings in 2023. These meetings engaged a total of 9 962 community members, focusing on the importance of conservation, sustainable resource use, and the role of local communities in protecting wildlife.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

- In 2023, Nyika National Park experienced an increase of incidences which impacted human wildlife coexistence, with a total of 127 cases reported, marking a rise of 117% compared to the previous year. This surge in conflicts was primarily driven by an increase in elephant activity and predation on domestic livestock by carnivores such as hyenas and jackals.
- Elephant-related conflicts were particularly concerning, with 27 incidents reported in 2023, up from just 11 in 2022. This rise in elephant encounters has underscored the need for robust mitigation strategies.

In 2023, Nyika National Park intensified efforts to manage human-wildlife coexistence through the implementation of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Scheme (HWCMS):

- **Fence Construction:** A 30-kilometer solar-powered fence was under construction to reduce elephant incursions into human settlements. The fence is expected to be completed in 2024. The construction is done by community members.
- **Training Programmes:** The park conducted training for fence attendants and a training of trainers workshop to enhance local capacity in managing the fence and responding to incursions. These efforts aimed to equip local teams with the skills needed to maintain the fence and monitor wildlife movements.

PRIORITY PLANNING 2024

- Finalise the purchase of the road maintenance equipment and work on accessibility within Nyika.
- Develop a plan to purchase and deploy helicopter for law enforcement operations.
- Continued training of the new community scout recruits.
- Increase efforts on fire management and invasive management.



VWAZA MARSH WILDLIFE RESERVE



VWAZA MARSH WILDLIFE RESERVE

Expenditure: The total expenditure for Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve was EUR 2 141 508, with a cumulative expenditure of EUR 5 387 161 by December 2023. The reserve utilised 98% of its budget.

Employment: 60 (Total) / 0 (Peace Parks donor funded)

ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- The reserve completed the rehabilitation of 47 out of 48 houses (97% completion rate). All seven houses at Kawiya camp were rehabilitated.
- Kasuni camp had to be closed due to the aging conditions of the chalets. A plan to replace these chalets with tents has been developed and presented for funding to the SADC TFCA facility.

ANTI-POACHING AND PROTECTION

- One hundred and twenty-six long patrols were conducted out of 158 planned patrols, resulting in a 80% execution rate. A total of 296 short patrols were conducted out of 249 planned, resulting in a 119% execution rate. The annual patrol coverage stood at 47%, which is below the target of 80% and slightly decreased from 2022's 57% coverage rate.

Parameters	2023			2022			2022	% change
	Jan-June	July-Dec	TOTAL	Jan-June	July-Dec	TOTAL		
Long patrols planned	87	76	163	78	80	158	163	-3
Long patrols effected	80	65	145	63	63	126	145	-13
Short patrols planned	86	113	199	166	177	343	199	72
Short patrols effected	134	155	289	221	232	453	289	57
Person days planned	3 507	3 601	7 108	3 193	3 146	6 339	7 108	-11
Person days effected	3 306	3 257	6 563	2 986	2 940	5 926	6 563	-10
Number of patrollers	27	23	50	26	28	54	50	8

- The Reserve encountered 474 illegal activities throughout the year. While the first half of the year saw a 17.4% increase in illegal activities, the latter half experienced a sharp decline of 61% in illegal encounters compared to 2022.
- A total of 42 convictions were recorded, with a 100% conviction rate in the latter half, up from 39% in the first half.
- Six new rangers were recruited by DNPW in Vwaza in 2023.
- Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve made significant progress in 2023 by developing and enforcing standard operation procedures in line with labour and employment relations associations recommendations. The reserve emphasised training for rangers to enhance their skills in applying these standard operation procedures, particularly in areas like crime scene management and operations control.

CONSERVATION AND REWILDING

- Six hundred tsetse targets were treated throughout the year. Three hundred and twelve were damaged by sunlight, and 98 were destroyed by elephants and are due to be replaced in 2024.
- Fourty people from local communities surrounding Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve were engaged to clear the firebreaks and prescribed burning was done in the month of July and August 2023. A total distance of 45 km of road network was cleared as firebreaks. Early burning was done in at least 45% of the reserve.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve saw a total of 1 089 paying visitors in 2023. This represents a 34% increase in the first half and an 18% increase in the second half of 2023, compared to the same periods in 2022.
- A total revenue of USD 6 301 was generated from tourism in 2023. Despite the increase in visitor numbers, revenue decreased by 45% in the second half of the year, affecting the infrastructure challenges met, particularly with the closing of the Kasuni chalets.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Activities in the periphery of Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve were centered around livelihood support programmes and resource utilisation, with a focus on sustainable practices.
- The reserve continued its support for livestock and high-value crop production, benefiting hundreds of households.
- Beekeeping remained a significant activity, with 520 kg of honey harvested during the year. The honey was a top contributor to the economic value generated by resource utilisation programmes.
- The reserve implemented a resource utilisation programme that allowed 926 community members to harvest various resources, including medicinal plants, thatch grass, and fish, with an estimated economic value of MK 2 534 800 (USD 2 337).
- Environmental Awareness Programmes: Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve carried out 54 participatory resource monitoring trips, involving 515 community members. The reserve held five key resolution meetings to address ongoing environmental challenges, particularly those related to human-wildlife coexistence.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

- Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve saw a positive trend in managing human-wildlife coexistence in 2023. The reserve recorded 131 incidents of conflict, representing a 27% decrease from the 180 cases reported in 2022. This reduction reflects the effectiveness of enhanced response teams and improved communication channels between the communities and the reserve's management.
- Elephants were the primary species involved in conflicts, with 15 incidents making up 36% of the serious cases. Other species, such as buffaloes, hippos, and a leopard, were also involved in conflicts, mostly related to crop damage and livestock predation.



- The reserve’s proactive approach to human-wildlife coexistence management, including rapid response initiatives and community-based training programmes, has been instrumental in curbing the number of incidents.
- Elephants are now largely prevented from entering directly from the reserve due to the 80 km solar-powered fence. However, some herds have adapted by moving into Zambia and re-entering Malawi on the other side of the fence. A joint collaring approach with Zambia is being considered for 2024 to better understand and manage this new movement pattern.

Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve made significant progress in 2023 with human-wildlife coexistence management system:

- Twenty-eight fence attendants from the surrounding communities are employed to monitor and maintain the 80 km fence around the reserve.
- A total of 42 community members were trained in fence maintenance and monitoring. This group included both the fence attendants from Vwaza and other participants from the surrounding community who were involved in the management efforts.

PRIORITY PLANNING 2024

- Manage human-wildlife coexistence, in particular elephants incursion coming from Zambia.
- Maintain the fence.
- Maintain effort in terms of fire management





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