

Shire Valley Transformation Programme - 1 (SVTP-1)

Natural Resource Management



Introduction

Malawi's forests, biodiversity resources and wetlands make a substantial socio-economic contribution to the country and are of particular importance to the poor – supplying most rural energy needs, household construction materials and generating substantial employment and income generation.



The Shire Valley Transformation Programme realizes the importance of environmental conservation in the implementation of all its activities. The Government of Malawi with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is implementing a Natural Resources Management sub-component to the tune of \$5.59 million.

The sub-component is aimed at promoting an inter-sectoral approach to the management of the Shire Valley landscape by:

- ✓ addressing biodiversity conservation;
- ✓ protecting and enhancing the role that forests, woodlands, rangelands and wetlands play in mitigating climate change;
- ✓ promoting sustainable approaches to forest management that protect forest resources and deliver benefits to local communities; and
- ✓ building resilience to short term weather shocks and longer-term climate variability for local stakeholders in a region considered highly exposed and vulnerable to climate change.

At the national level GEF support will help the Government of Malawi to address broader regional and global priorities for wildlife conservation, consistent with the objectives and priorities of the Global Wildlife Program.

Specifically, this will include support for:

- ✓ the strengthening of wildlife crime policy and the implementation of the National Elephant Action Plan. Malawi faces a growing wildlife crime challenges which include illegal killing of African elephants to supply illegal international markets for ivory as well as growing illegal trade in other wildlife species including rhinos;
- ✓ updating the IUCN Red list (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species); and
- ✓ drafting legislation that can better define Access and Benefit sharing arrangements for genetic resources consistent with the Nagoya Protocol.

Project Beneficiaries and GEF support

The SVTP will benefit smallholder farmers and other farmers in the targeted districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje. Smallholder farmers who are the owners of the land will be the primary beneficiaries of the irrigation water. The estimated 2016 population in the project area was 279,550 people in 60,772 households. GEF support will specifically benefit communities living in and around forests, wetlands and conservation areas and shall enhance revenue for conservation and local communities from nature-based tourism.

GEF Sub-Component Intervention Sites

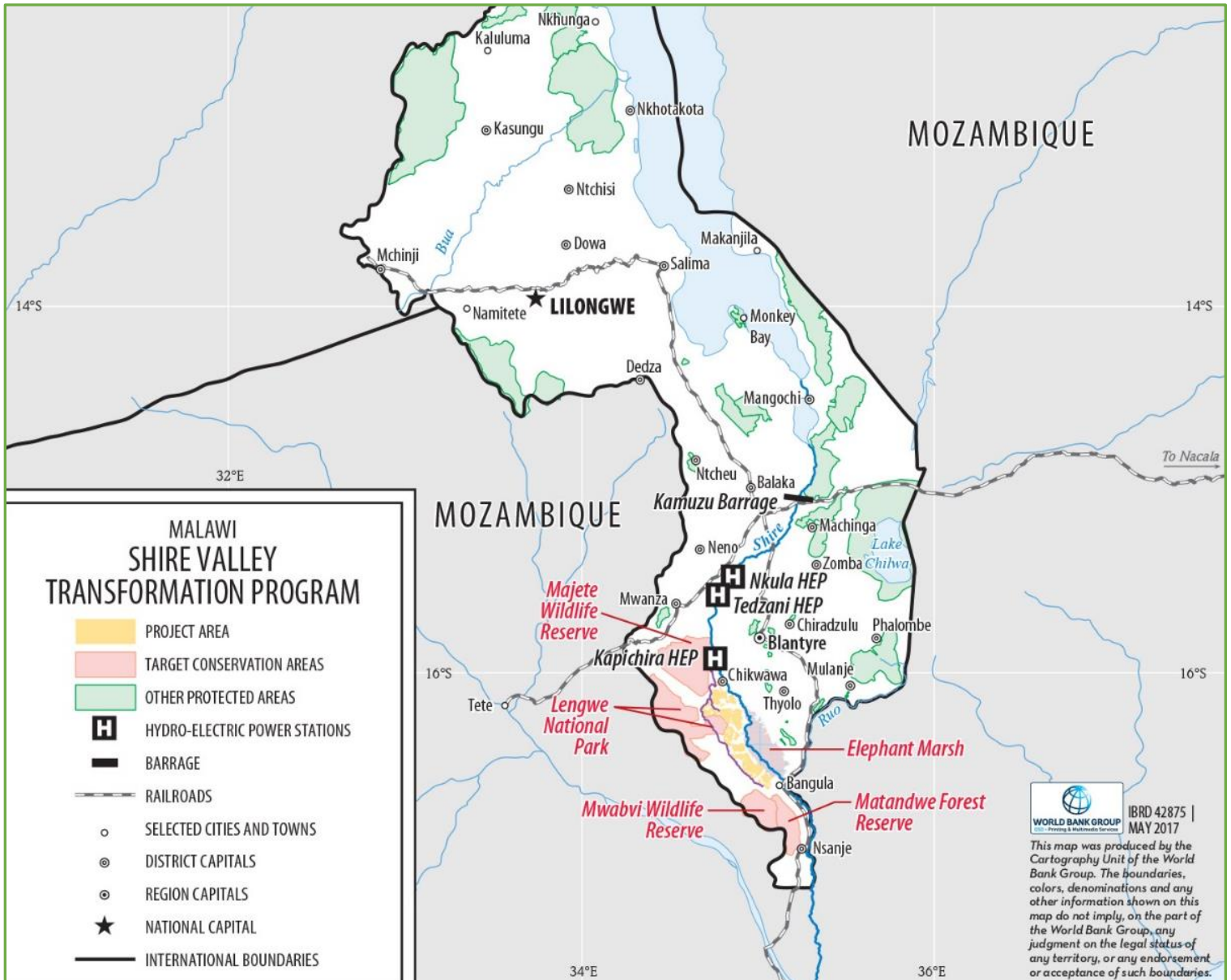
Conservation areas that will benefit from GEF support within the Lower Shire landscape total over 281,000 hectares.

Lower Shire landscape conservation areas and their relative sizes

Name of site	Total area (ha)
Elephant Marsh	61,556
New Lengwe	77,587
Majete	77,754
Matandwe	28,915
Mwabvi	35,193
Total	281,005

Natural Resources Sub-Component Intervention Sites

The intervention sites include Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve, Matandwe Forest Reserve, Elephant Marsh, New Lengwe and Majete Wildlife Reserves.



Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve and Matandwe Forest Reserve

Protect the largest remaining block of woodlands and forests remaining in the Lower Shire Valley. These woodlands and forests are key for protecting environmental services on the steep slopes of the western escarpment. The SVTP will therefore:

- ✓ strengthen the delivery of livelihood benefits for local communities and revenues to sustain landscape management through nature-based tourism;
- ✓ support development of forest co-management plans and planning of forest co-management in and around forest reserves in the Lower Shire watershed and expanding key sites; and
- ✓ reserve co-management once funded by the Shire River Basin Management Project will also be scaled up.

Picture Courtesy of Colin Tilbury



World's rarest chameleon, Chapman's Pygmy found at Matandwe Forest

Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve has been affected by poaching which has led to the decline of animal populations such as buffaloes, kudu and impala. The Reserve has also been affected by illegal logging which has destroyed habitat for the animals and lack of water for animals during the dry season.

Through the SVTP, infrastructure at the Reserve will be improved including tourist trails, roads, and solar powered water holes, law enforcement will be strengthened and a resource use program will be implemented.

Elephant Marsh

These wetlands are critical for supporting some key freshwater fisheries, soaking up major flood peaks from the Shire and Ruo rivers and sustain internationally important wetland biodiversity, dry season agriculture and livestock grazing for communities in the Shire Valley.

The Elephant Marsh is also home to significant rare and threatened biodiversity requiring improved management that balances the needs of local people and the imperative of building resilience of these communities to highly variable climatic conditions and longer-term climate change.

The marsh was designated on July 1, 2017 as a 'Wetland of International Importance' under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands and has been proposed for national designation as Malawi's first Community Conservation Area.

Government of Malawi is planning to establish the Elephant marsh as Malawi's first 'Community Conservation Wetland Area' with the intention of balancing local livelihood needs with the longer-term, sustainable management of the marsh ecosystem.

The SVTP will:

- ✓ enable the implementation of the first phase of the Community Based Management Plan for the Elephant Marsh; and
- ✓ support start up management of the wetland management plan for the Elephant Marsh and conservation measures for the remaining fish biodiversity and wildlife populations.

New Lengwe and Majete Wildlife Reserve

Collectively the new Lengwe-Majete protected-area-complex covers a large area, and is strategically placed within the lower Shire biodiversity network. New Lengwe (also known as the Lengwe Extension Area) was established by government to protect the steeply sloping catchments of the Lower Shire, which suffer regularly from severe flooding. The woodlands of these conservation areas also maintain important populations of Elephant (400), Black Rhino (20), and naturally occurring Nyala (600).

Support to these sites would build on prior investments at Old Lengwe and would provide support to introduce improved management regimes in the extensive woodlands and forests of New Lengwe – which are currently under severe pressure from illegal commercial logging and over-exploitation.

The project will:

- ✓ support the extension of the park management plan to cover New Lengwe; and
- ✓ development of co-management arrangements with local communities and explore possibilities of preparation of a landscape corridor that could protect ecological linkages between New Lengwe and Majete Wildlife Reserve.



Impala at Lengwe Wildlife Reserve

Picture Courtesy of Lengwe Wildlife Reserve, SVTP

Biodiversity Conservation

The Protected Areas of the lower Shire hold rare and threatened biodiversity. In the lower Shire, Majete Wildlife Reserve hosts impressive populations of Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), Lion (*Panthera leo*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), and Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*); while neighboring Lengwe National Park is home to the most northern naturally occurring populations of Nyala (*Tragelaphus angasii*).

Further south is the Elephant Marsh that covers an area approximately 600km² and is internationally recognized for water birds (African Skimmer (*Rynchops flavirostris*), African Pygmy Goose (*Nettapus auritus*), and Pel's Fishing Owl (*Scotopelia peli*)) and important fish species such as Chambo (*Oreochromis sp.*).

In the very south is Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve, which has recently experienced high levels of illegal wildlife hunting, and once home to the last naturally occurring populations of Black Rhino in Malawi, it boasts a stunning landscape with many species of antelope. It borders the larger Matandwe Forest Reserve thus providing a much larger protected area landscape for animals to disperse. Matandwe Forest Reserve is home to the world's rarest chameleon, Chapman's Pygmy Chameleon (*Rhampholeon chapmani*).

Summary of Key Activities under the Sub-Component

- Strengthen legal capacity to develop effective regulatory and administrative frameworks for implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing.
- Reduce the levels of illegal hunting and logging in the protected areas in the Lower Shire through aerial and remote sensing monitoring of illegal hunting and logging.
- Increase in Nature-based tourism at Protected Areas through marketing strategies and improving visitor attractions at sites.
- Assess and update the IUCN Red Data list for Malawi to include threatened, endangered, endemic and rare species. The National IUCN RED list is out of date (2005) and needs updating.
- Increase capacity for implementation and cooperation among law enforcement agencies and relevant international organizations in range, transit, and consumer states to reduce illegal wildlife trafficking.
- Develop and Implement three site-based management plans in collaboration between relevant stakeholders (New Lengwe, Elephant Marsh, Mwabvi) and support management of Majete Wildlife Reserve.
- Reduce the number of Human Wildlife Conflicts and Problem Animal Control incidents through implementing appropriate mitigation measures. This activity will focus on particular species such as hippo, buffalo, and crocodile.
- Establish and implement the Elephant Marsh Community Conservation Wetland Area through the endorsement of the RAMSAR nomination file and management plan.
- Support for the start-up of initial wetland management operations focusing on optimizing benefits to local communities and livelihoods.
- Support for the conservation of fish biodiversity and sustainable wetland management. This will include scaling up of community fisheries management (CFM).



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For more details, visit the SVTP website on: www.svtp.gov.mw

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