



Case study: Community-based natural resource management

## Futi Corridor, Mozambique

The Futi Corridor forms an important transfrontier ecological link between Maputo Special Reserve in Mozambique and Thembe Elephant Park in South Africa. However, the communities living in and surrounding the corridor are very poor and largely rely on natural resources for sustenance and livelihoods. A group of local conservation and social welfare organisations has been working together to improve the capacity of communities to manage their natural resources. This has helped to revitalise the community natural resource committees. A better understanding of the ecosystem goods and services that flow from healthy ecological infrastructure, and the promotion of sustainable alternative livelihoods, is helping to reduce human pressure on the environment of the Futi Corridor.

## Background

The Matutuíne district in southern Mozambique hosts a number of significant biodiversity areas. One of these is the Futi Corridor, a recently proclaimed protected area that forms a link between Maputo Special Reserve in Mozambique and Thembe Elephant Park in South Africa. It re-establishes historical migration routes for elephants, following the course of the Futi River through special swamp ecosystems. Also in Matutuíne district are the Licuati forests – ancient and unique sand forests with extremely high levels of endemism. The Futi Corridor and Licuati forests were identified as Key Biodiversity Areas within the Maputaland–Pondoland–Albany Hotspot, not only for their biological significance, but also for their relatively poor levels of management capacity.

The communities living in, or surrounding, the Futi Corridor and Licuati forest, are very poor and rely largely on natural resources for their sustenance and livelihoods. As a result, excessive logging, charcoal production, poaching, bush fires and encroaching human settlements, among other causes, are responsible for the progressive and ongoing impoverishment of the unique biodiversity of the area. Unsustainable resource use is affecting the health of the very ecosystems on which these communities rely so heavily, with the long-term prospect of increasing poverty.



## Action

Given the dependence of the local communities on the natural resources of the area, many complex socio-economic factors needed to be considered in addressing the unsustainable use of natural resources. For this reason, a number of non-governmental organisations had been working in the Matutuíne district to tackle different aspects of community wellbeing and encourage sustainable use of natural resource. These organisations realised that by combining their efforts they would be able to implement a co-ordinated set of actions that could potentially counteract the threats within a larger targeted area. By establishing a conservation consortium, they could consolidate their individual initiatives within the region, making limited resources and capacity go further.

Members of the consortium included CESVI, who offered expertise in capacity building and administrative co-ordination, LUPA, whose aptitude is for promoting dialogue within communities and for increasing responsibility towards environmental conservation, and ORAM, who works with small-scale farmers to improve food security and ensure their land rights. The consortium also worked and co-ordinated with other organisations working in the Matutuíne district, in particular with KUWUKA JDA, who conducted community training on community-based natural resources management and biodiversity conservation. They also conducted a study on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and environmental education into the district development plan, and into the activities of district-based civil society organisations.



## Capacity building

Many of the threats in the region could be addressed through improved capacity of the communities to conduct sustainable natural resource management in their areas. Natural resource management committees exist in the communities, but are poorly trained, unable to make informed decisions and cannot solve conflicts about land allocation and use. Thus, much of the work of the consortium members was conducted towards building increased capacity. In particular, capacity building was aimed at assisting the existing natural resource management committees to improve their functioning and increase their awareness of environmental, land, forest and wildlife laws. This gave the people an important sense of ownership over their natural resources. Communities have also benefitted from HIV/AIDS education, with healthy people more likely to care about the conservation of the environment. Training on agricultural practices and assistance with establishing alternative livelihoods have aimed to reduce pressure on the natural environment. This emphasises how meeting other needs of the communities can work in tandem with conservation initiatives.

## Achievements

A number of achievements can be attributed to the consortium. More than 40 community representatives were trained on topics related to biodiversity conservation. Eleven community based natural resource committees were revitalised and given training. Conservation-friendly income generating activities were set up, including beekeeping, stock-keeping and handicrafts. Engagement with the private sector was promoted among the local communities, while involvement with the local authorities resulted in the increased protection of the target areas. Land-related conflicts have decreased.





Other than these practical achievements, which are of course important, a larger success has been the creation of a better enabling environment for conservation of ecological infrastructure. This approach enhanced the understanding of how communities and development sectors benefit from functioning ecosystems, what policies and incentive

measures can reinforce sustainability, and what activities incur the risk of damaging vital ecosystem services. By increasing the awareness of the ecosystem goods and services that flow from healthy ecological infrastructure, stakeholders are motivated to turn towards greener initiatives without fear of losing economic advantages or access rights.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**

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