

Kasungu Elephants Foundation

www.kasunguelephants.org

A park outside the park: Permaculture for reducing human/wildlife conflict, improving livelihood and bolstering biodiversity in the buffer zone of Kasungu National Park, Malawi

Summary

We propose to consolidate and widen a community project started recently (2016) in M'ndaka village on the boundary of Kasungu National Park in Central Malawi.

The Park has seen a rapid deterioration in its animal numbers through poaching activities which include the cutting of fire wood, setting of wire snares and gun poaching; additional threats to the park are land claim for tobacco farming and other crops and fires started by poachers and local communities. KNP is large with 2,281 km² and less than 10% of its border is fenced. Where there is no fence, incursion from communities is resulting in a large adverse impact. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) that is managing the park is substantially under-resourced. The project will provide an alternative solution to communities bordering the open space of the park while contributing to habitat restoration, reduce poaching of wild animals- elephants in particular, while improving the living standards.

The villagers of M'ndaka are already involved in bee-keeping and mushroom-growing initiatives serving to protect their crops from elephants and replace wild mushrooms gathered from the park. Building on goodwill and collaborations already in place we will integrate these elements into a permaculture design including organic vegetable/fruit gardens, soil restoration, water harvesting structures, tree planting, no-tillage crops and other sustainable practices. The project is designed as an open-ended step-by-step process building local capacity and sustainability. The project is communal: participants will share produce and income while contributing to conservation of wildlife and natural resources. Perhaps of wider impact, the location will serve as a demonstration and dissemination site for the multiple practices/techniques involved; and as the project grows we intend to put in place infrastructure and services to this end (education center, open days/training's, nursery/seed-bank etc.)

Expected outcomes include:

- Added income from sale of high value products (honey, mushrooms, vegetables)
- Increased food security and nutritional variety
- Skills transmission and capacity building in multiple techniques/practices
- Human/wildlife conflict reduction (especially elephants)
- Improved relations/attitude between the village and the park/conservation
- Restoration of degraded land
- Habitat monitoring(Game count)
- Increased Biodiversity on project site

The long-term vision is to engage all parties to the current friction in a creative transformation of a degraded landscape and conflict site in to a “park outside the park” with multiple benefits to all.