

# PROVIDING A HAND UP, NOT A HAND OUT

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## FISH FOR TOMORROW PROJECT IN NKHOTAKOTA DISTRICT

### Overview

Donor Name: Foundation Eagle  
Project Name: RIPPLE Africa Fish For Tomorrow in Lake Malawi – rapid extension of project into Chia Lagoon and surrounding area, Nkhotakota District  
Grant Size: £41,183  
Grant Period: April 2017 to April 2019

### Project Overview

Fish for Tomorrow is a community based fisheries protection system in northern Malawi. The Participatory Fisheries Management (PFM) Programme, introduced in Malawi in 1993, has not effectively protected the Chambo Fish which is now on the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species. RIPPLE Africa's project was started in an attempt to introduce a completely new community led approach to conservation to help conserve the remaining stocks of Chambo Fish in the lake and has the following aims:

The project is now being implemented in Nkhata Bay and Nkhotakota Districts by Ripple Africa in partnership with the Department of Fisheries. This funding is to enable us to introduce the project in an accelerated way in Chia Lagoon, which has traditionally been one of the key breeding areas in the country for Chambo but which has now been almost denuded of fish through the use of mosquito nets.

In Chia Lagoon, we are working more closely with local fishing communities and District Fisheries staff to introduce new bylaws more quickly and begin the project in a more intensive way as the situation here is critical. Funding from Fondation Eagle is helping us offer the same level of support and training over the next two years in Chia Lagoon, Nkhotakota as we have done in our long running project areas in Nkhata Bay District and ensure that the decline in fish stocks is halted to safeguard livelihoods and food security.

### Progress to Date

As a way of implementing the project the following activities have been carried out in Chia Lagoon:

1. Election of Fish Conservation Committees (FCCs)
2. Training of Fish Conservation Committees
3. Conducting awareness campaigns
4. Confiscation of illegal fishing gear by FCCs
5. Review meetings with FCCs

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## **ELECTION OF FISH CONSERVATION COMMITTEES**

Fish Conservation Committees create a the sense of ownership and enable the local community to work in partnership with Fisheries Department in a more structured way to reduce illegal fishing practices. There are now **14** Fish Conservation Committees around Chia lagoon.

## **TRAINING OF FISH CONSERVATION COMMITTEES**

The members of these FCCs then undertake training which is run by RIPPLE Africa staff and Fisheries Extension Workers. Training highlights the causes of the decline in fish stocks, how the project will enable fish stocks to increase again and the duties and roles of Fish Conservation Committees. All **14** FCCs around Chia Lagoon have now completed this training and are fully operational.

## **AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

Once FCCs are operational, the project concentrates on holding awareness raising campaigns with all levels of the local community conducted around Chia lagoon. The idea is to impart knowledge to all community members living around Chia lagoon on how the project works, why it is important and how they need to be aware of the dangers of overfishing if they want to see fish stocks increase on the lagoon. Many of the problems facing the lagoon are caused by individuals using mosquito nets to catch the baby fish in shallow water and it is therefore vital that this message is spread to all community members. About **20** awareness campaigns have been conducted including one conducted by Malawi's Director of Fisheries Alexander Bulirani in May 2017. This visit helped fishing community members to understand the partnership between Ripple Africa and Malawi's Department of Fisheries.

A discussion day on the project and the Fisheries Management Act was held in May with Judiciary and Police in Nkhotakota District so that they are aware of FCC responsibilities and how they relate to current net confiscation and fining procedures

## **CONFISCATION OF ILLEGAL FISHING GEARS**

To ensure that fish are conserved in Chia lagoon, Fish Conservation Committees have confiscated illegal gears such as mosquito nets, under meshed gill nets, fish traps and some beach seine nets. In total **91** illegal gears have been confiscated over the past six months. Most of these were mosquito nets.

## **REVIEW MEETINGS WITH FCCs**

Review meetings are conducted on regular basis with the aim of empowering the communities to develop the sense of ownership.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

We are continuing to input details onto the database of fishermen, fishing gear (nets, boats etc), permits, confiscations, landing sites and Fish Conservation Committee formation

Claire Mollatt joined our team in May to work on project monitoring and evaluation and data analysis. Claire is an experienced manager who has a background in environmental projects and an excellent understanding of both fish conservation and monitoring and evaluation. Claire has been working with our team in Nkhotakota to ensure that our fish conservation database is functioning effectively and is

now supporting the team in establishing monitoring systems to measure catch sizes, fishing effort and the impact of the project on income and livelihoods.

we are holding meetings with District Concillors and the District Executive Council to prepare for the approval of bylaws in Nkhotakota District which is scheduled to take place in November or December.



Awareness Raising Meeting at Chia Lagoon



Alex Bulirani, Malawi's Director of Fisheries addressing a meeting of local community members at Chia Lagoon



Fish Conservation Committee Members, Chiefs, District Fisheries staff and RIPPLE Africa team members at Chia Lagoon FCC meeting

### Challenges and Successes

- Behaviour change takes a long time and Chia Lagoon is no different in this respect than other areas. However there is huge commitment from local communities to see change happen and this is driving the project forward here.
- There has been less participation of women in the Nkhotakota area than in Nkhata Bay, possibly due to religious barriers and a lack of a sense of empowerment. This challenge extends to the involvement of schools. However, the presence of a female project manager here is helping break down these barriers and several of the local chiefs around Chia Lagoon are female which is also helping encourage other women to get involved
- This has been a very successful six months for the project. We have built a strong working relationship with the District Fisheries Officer and his team in Nkhotakota and on behalf of all who are benefitting from this project, we would like to thank the Trustees of Eagle Foundation for their support.

### Budget

	Number	Apr - October 2017
Meetings		
Chief Meetings	4	£1,073
Government meetings	1	£609
Community Meetings	2	£1,176
Contribution to Bylaw signing		£0
Monthly costs		
Committee Meetings	6	£1,765
Fisheries staff x 2 inc transport	6	£1,412
Fisheries DFO and office	6	£2,118
Umbrella committee members	6	£706
Ripple Staff Costs inc motorbikes	6	£2,824
Office contribution	6	£706
Vehicle costs contribution	6	£3,530
Total		£15,917

On behalf of all you are helping by donating to our fish conservation project, we would like to say:  
**TAWONGA UKONGWA! Thank you very much!**



Pam Haigh  
UK General Manager  
25/10/2017