



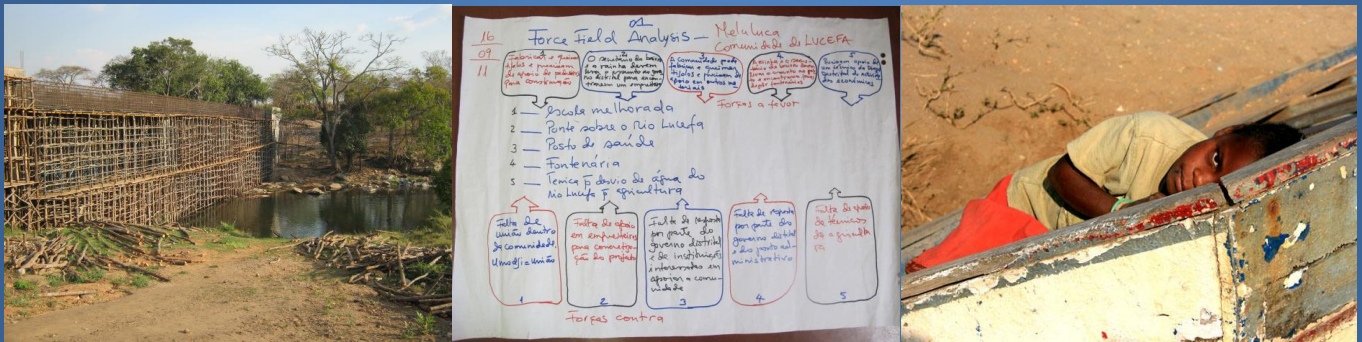
SVERIGES AMBASSAD

Embassy of Sweden  
Maputo

# Reality Checks in Mozambique

- Building better understanding of the dynamics of poverty and well-being -

## Annual Report Year One, 2011



# ORGUT

in cooperation with:



The 'Reality Checks in Mozambique' is implemented by ORGUT Consulting in association with AustralCOWI and the Chr. Michelsen Institute on behalf of the Embassy of Sweden in Maputo.

The Reality Checks are implemented 2011-2016 and each year field work is carried out in the Municipality of Cuamba, the District of Lago and the District of Majune in the Niassa Province.

This is the Annual Report for Year One of the Reality Checks and aims at summarising the conclusions based on the findings from the field sub-report from each study location. The Annual Report is written by the Team Leader for the Reality Checks in Mozambique, Dr. Inge Tvedten.

This document has been financed by the Embassy of Sweden in Maputo. The Embassy does not necessarily share the views expressed in this material. Responsibility for its contents rests entirely with the author.

Cover Photos:  
The hope of the future: Bridge over Luchimua River, Majune: Minna Tuominen  
Boy on boat: Kajsa Johansson

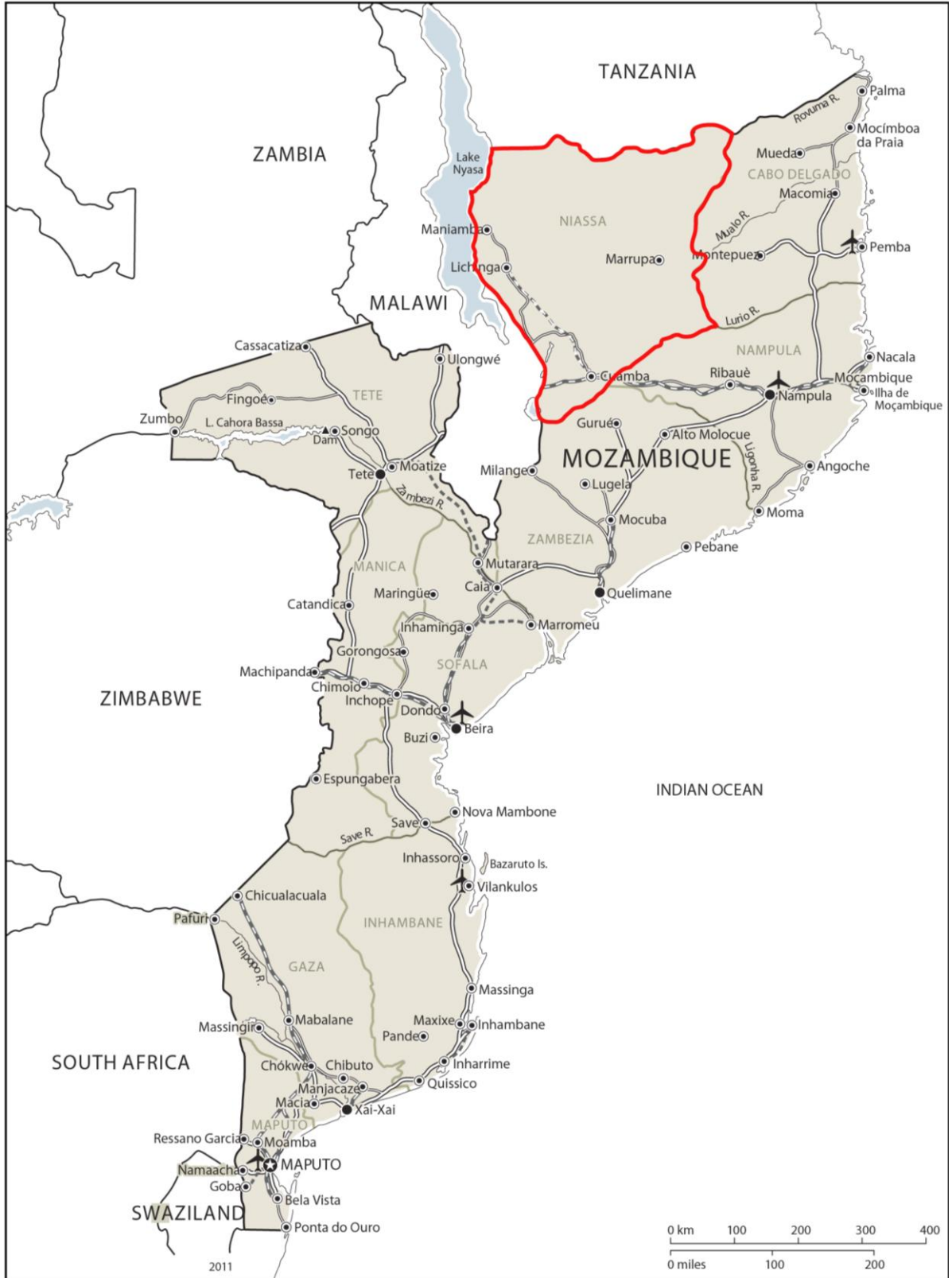
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Map 1. Reality Checks Mozambique / Niassa



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty monitoring and evaluation in Mozambique primarily take place within the framework of the implementation of Mozambique's Poverty Reduction Strategy PARP/A (GdM 2005; 2011), and is informed by quantitative data derived from different types of national surveys and similar studies done by bilateral and multilateral aid organisations (see e.g. INE 2010; MPD 2010; World Bank 2007; UNICEF 2011).

However, by their quantitative nature such surveys do not capture all the dimensions of poverty that are relevant to the design of policies and programmes. While quantitative data yield valuable information about the mapping and profile of poverty over space and time, qualitative data are necessary in order to better understand the dynamics of poverty and the coping strategies of the poor (ORGUT 2011a; Addison et al. 2009).

## 1.1 The Reality Checks

Against this background, the Swedish Embassy in Maputo and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) have decided that there is a need to assess the impact of development and poverty reduction policies 'from below', and to regularly consult local populations in order to understand local processes and relationships.

A series of five "Reality Checks in Mozambique" will take place in the period 2011-2016, focussing on the dynamics of poverty and well-being with a particular focus on good governance, agriculture/climate and energy that are key sectors in Swedish development cooperation with the country. Each Reality Check will be published in the form of one Annual Report and three Sub-Reports from each of the three selected study-sites (see ORGUTa 2011 for more details).

More concretely, the "Reality Checks in Mozambique" are expected to:

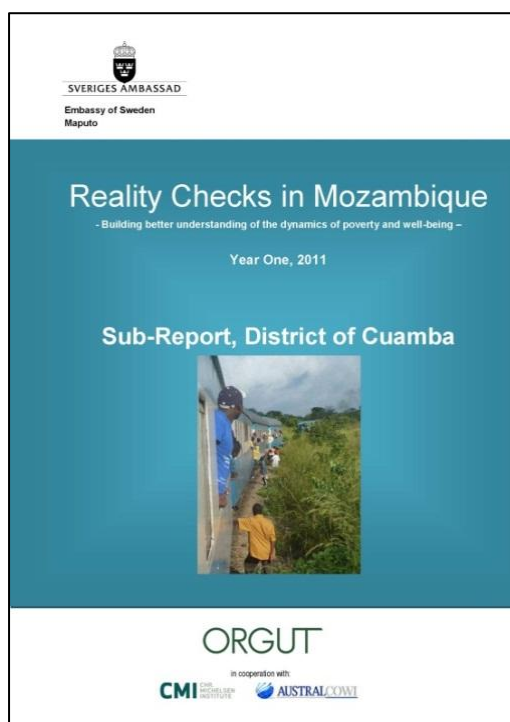
- i) Inform the public discussion among key development actors on poverty reduction, especially in the province of Niassa;
- ii) Contribute to a better understanding of qualitative poverty monitoring methods in Mozambique;
- iii) Provide Sweden with relevant qualitative data on developments and results from its engagement in Mozambique and support further implementation of its programme in Niassa.

The Reality Checks are expected to achieve these objectives by enhancing knowledge on:

- i) Poverty (non-tangible dimensions of poverty, such as vulnerability and powerlessness; poor people's own perceptions of poverty; causal processes underpinning poverty dynamics: coping/survival strategies adopted by women and men living in poverty);
- ii) Local power relations and relationships with state institutions (formal [i.e. political, administrative] institutions that enable or constrain people to carry out their strategies; informal [i.e. cultural, social, family or kin-based etc.] institutions that enable or constrain people to carry out their strategies), and;
- iii) Policies and services (access to, use of and demand for public services according to people living in poverty; quality of public services according to people living in poverty).

There is also an expectation that the Reality Checks shall, to the extent that it is relevant for the local population under study, pay special attention to “priority issues identified in the annual reviews of projects and programmes within Swedish priority sectors (see Terms of Reference).

The series of studies was initiated by an Inception Report published in August 2011 (ORGUT 2011a). Through that exercise, it was decided that the Reality Checks shall be based on fieldwork in three different Districts/Municipalities in the Province of Niassa that display variations in terms of geographical locations, access to public services and levels of poverty and well-being. The three areas selected were i) the District of Lago; ii) the District of Cuamba; and iii) the District of Majune (see Map 2).



Cover Sub-Report, District of Cuamba

Fieldwork for the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check was carried out in September 2011. Sub-Reports from the Districts of Lago (ORGUT 2011b), the District of Majune (ORGUT 2011c) and the District of Cuamba (ORGUT 2011d) have already been published. This is the Annual Report for the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check, which synthesises the main findings from the Sub-Reports. Readers interested in more detailed descriptions and analyses from the three sites should consult the Sub-Reports.

Being the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report of the Reality Checks in Mozambique, this report will serve as a ‘baseline’ for subsequent reports. It therefore includes some more general background information and data about Niassa and the three project sites, which will be used as points of departure for more profound analyses of local power relations, poverty and well-being at later stages. Each of the subsequent reports will also have a special thematic focus, starting with good governance in the 2012 Reality Check (see ORGUT 2011a).

## 1.2 Methodologies

Methodologically, the studies are based on a combination of quantitative information derived from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and District Authorities; a Baseline Survey in the three project sites (2011 and 2015); key informant interviews in the provincial capital Lichinga and the selected Districts/Municipality; participant observation in the local communities selected for fieldwork; and a set of qualitative/participatory methodologies including immersion with households in different socio-economic situations. The methodologies are described in detail in a separate report entitled “Reality Checks in Mozambique. Analytical Approach and Methodologies” (ORGUT 2011f), but a brief summary is in place:

### *Quantitative Data*

For the mapping of poverty and well-being in Niassa, the team will relate actively to existing quantitative data. These will include the 2007 National Census (INE 2009b); the 2008/09 National Household Expenditure Survey (INE 2010, see also van den Boom 2010); and other more sector-specific studies (see List of Literature). In addition to national data-sets, we use quantitative data from locally based surveys with particular attention to data produced by



provincial-, district and municipal governments that form the basis for their development plans – including the Provincial Social and Economic Development Plan (GdN 2007, 2011) and the District Social and Economic Development Plan (PESODS).

We will secure adequate quantitative data to map peoples' relations to public services and poverty and well-being in the three study sites by carrying out a Baseline Survey with a total of 360 households (120 in each site). The survey will be done twice with the same families, i.e. in the beginning (2011) and end (2015) of the project period, and represents rare panel-data. The Baseline and the follow-up survey will seek to combine i) classical socio-economic data on the composition of households, income and expenditure, levels of education, health and access to public services; ii) questions relating to people's *perceptions* of conditions in the household and their community and iii) the *social relationships* (with public institutions, aid projects, family, friends etc.) in which they are engaged.

### **Qualitative data**

For the political/institutional dimensions of the Reality Checks, we will mostly rely on i) semi-structured interviews with key development actors including provincial government, district/municipal government, Institutions for Community Participation and Consultation (IPCCs), traditional authorities and private sector representatives, and ii) case-studies of concrete programs and interventions particularly in the areas of governance, agriculture and energy. We also complement the classical anthropological methodology of 'participant observation' with a set of concrete participatory methodologies that will be applied in focus groups, and expanded case studies at household level. The groups are composed of men or women, young or old or a mixture of such groups, depending on the topic at hand.

The participatory methodologies used for the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check include i) *Histograms* (with the objective to ascertain the history of each site under study, with an emphasis on events and processes that have been particularly important for current socio-economic conditions of well-being and poverty); ii) *Community Mapping* (with the objective to map buildings and institutions considered most important for the life of the community); iii) *Force-Field Analysis* (with the objective to capture perceptions of what conditions may inhibit or accelerate the type of change and development favoured by the community); iv) *Venn-diagram* (identifying the most important resources [people and services] that the community has access to); v) *Community problem matrix* (identifying and ranking the most important problems that affect the community or larger groups of people in the community); and vi) *Wealth Ranking* (with the objective to capture the community's own perception about different levels and categories of poverty and well-being).

### **Focus Households**

The wealth ranking exercise forms the basis for our identification of *Focus Households* with whom we will relate closely through various forms of immersion during the course of the Reality Checks. As will be discussed in more detail below, the communities tend to distinguish between 2-4 levels of poverty or 'poor people' and 1-3 levels of well-being or 'better-off' people – each with their own dynamics and position in the communities. Altogether 20 Focus Households have been selected from these categories and will be interviewed in depth every year, with a focus on changes in their social relationships with the extended family, neighbours and friends, community organisations and state institutions as well as changes in their socio-economic position.

### 1.3 Poverty in Mozambique

We will end these introductory notes with a brief outline of poverty and well-being in Mozambique, in order to place Niassa in its proper context. In many ways, development and poverty reduction efforts are at a cross-road in Mozambique. Despite an impressive economic growth over the past decades averaging seven to eight percent and the fact that poverty reduction has been high on the political agenda, standard indicators such as GDP per capita (ranked 197 out of 210 countries), the Human Development Index (ranked 184 out of 187 countries)<sup>1</sup> and the Gender Development Index (ranked 123 out of 130 countries) reveal that the overwhelming majority of Mozambicans remain poor. Important improvements have recently been made particularly in access to education and health (INE 2010), but these are still not reflected in improvements in material poverty and well-being.

During the past five years former reductions in the poverty rate have also come to an abrupt halt, questioning the relevance and efficiency of current endeavours. While the consumption-based poverty rate dropped from 69,4 to 54,1 percent between 1996/97 and 2002/03, it increased from 54.1 to 54.7 percent between 2002/03 and 2008/09 (INE 2010). Having said this, the poverty rate shows large and at times quite incomprehensible variations between geographical regions (north, central, south) and socio-economic configurations (urban, rural).<sup>2</sup> There are also indications of a relatively large group of 'ultra' and chronically poor who effectively are trapped in poverty and deprivation and who are not in a position to relate to the development efforts taking place (INE 2010, MPD 2010b, see also Cunguara and Hanlon 2010).

In this picture, Niassa stands out as having shown the clearest and most consistent improvements in consumption-based poverty – even though from a very low point of departure. Poverty in the province has been reduced from 70.6 percent in 1996/97, to 54.1 percent in 2002/03 and to 31.9 percent in 2008/09 – albeit disguising an unusually high discrepancy in poverty between male-headed households (28 percent) and female-headed households (45 percent) (INE 2010). As seen from Table 1 below, Niassa shows a varied picture in relation to other quantitative indicators of poverty and well-being in Mozambique. An important aspect of the Reality Checks in Mozambique is to assess the realism, relevance and dynamics behind these figures, by applying qualitative and participatory methodologies involving the population itself.

**Table 1: Key Socio-Economic Indicators – Mozambique and Niassa (Percent)**

Indicator	Mozambique	Niassa
Poverty Headcount	54.7	31.9
Gini Coefficient (0-1)*	0.414	0.427
Proportion Female Headed Households	29.6	16.3
Illiteracy of household head	44.3	51.6
Primary School Attendance Rate	81	78
Chronic malnutrition under five years	43.7	45.0
HIV-AIDS Prevalence	11.5	3.7
Quality housing (solid roof)	24.8	8.1
Electric lighting in dwelling	13.2	5.8
Bicycle ownership	38.1	65.4

Sources: MISAU 2005; INE 2010 and 2009a. \* The Gini Coefficient measure economic inequality, with 0 being complete inequality and 1 being complete equality.

<sup>1</sup> The HDI measures income, educational attainment and health. Only Burundi, Niger and DRC are ranked lower (UNDP 2011)

<sup>2</sup> See van den Boom (2010) for an alternative interpretation of the INE data.



## 2. BACKGROUND TO NIASSA

The province of Niassa has a long and at times volatile history (Newitt 1995; Medeiros 1997, pers.comm. Tore Sætersdal). Original settlements of hunters and gatherers dates back to the Late Stone Age up to 18000 years ago, and were probably relatives of the Ba'Twa of the Great Forests in Central Africa. Bantu migrants from West Africa started to arrive in Niassa between 1800 and 2000 years ago. They brought with them their languages, agriculture, iron and ceramics, and settled both at the *planalto* and along Lake Niassa. The main ethno-linguistic groups were the Macua, the Yao and the Nyanja.

The area was approached by Swahili and Muslim traders in goods and slaves as early as between 1200 and 1300, and was colonised by the Portuguese from between 1600 and 1700 – followed by Anglican missionaries from the mid-1800 to conquer hearts and souls as well. Niassa was distant from the core areas of colonial economic activities in Mozambique, and control was eventually maintained by handing over large areas to the chartered British Niassa Company controlling Niassa and Cabo Delgado. The colonial economy was based on a system of forced labour (*chibalo*), with people being compelled to pay taxes and – as a result of that – produce coffee, cotton and other cash crops leaving limited time and options to produce their own food.

The war of independence, initiated in 1962, led to an abrupt halt in economic activities and increased insecurity in Niassa. People in the province were active in the struggle and staunch supporters Frelimo. Although in many ways marginal in the colonial project, the Portuguese thus had to spend considerable efforts in defending it until they finally lost in 1975. Upon Independence, however, Niassa found itself increasingly marginalised – this time in relation to the Frelimo state. The province was turned into 'Mozambique's Siberia', as 'non-productive' people (unemployed, thieves, prostitutes, street dwellers and other 'undesirables' including political opposition) were sent to Niassa in what was called 'Operation Production'.

At the same time, the 'civil war' between Frelimo forces and those of Renamo from 1983 became vicious as the latter had acquired a strong position in Niassa – partly as a result of Frelimo's policies of (forced) resettlements and partly due to lack of investments and development from the Frelimo government following Independence. At the end of the civil war in 1992, Niassa was generally regarded as the poorest and least developed province in Mozambique. The **Histogram Exercises** done for this study – where traditional leaders and elders tell the history as they see it – largely reflect these developments but tend to emphasise the leading role of traditional authorities and the implications of the developments for their local communities (see Sub Reports for more details).

Currently Niassa is the country's largest province, with an area of 129,056 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.415.157 (INE 2007, 2010). It is also the least densely populated province, with an average of seven people per square kilometres. With Lichinga as its capital, the province has 15 districts and four municipalities (Lichinga, Cuamba, Marrupa and Metangula). The Ruvuma River forms much of the northern boundary of the province with Tanzania, while Lake Niassa forms its western border, separating Niassa from Malawi. To the east and south, Niassa borders with the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Zambézia.

Ethnically Niassa is a mixture of Macua, who comprise 47.5 percent of the population, primarily in the south and east around Cuamba; Yao, who comprise 36.9 percent, in and around Lichinga; and Nyanja, who comprise 8.4 percent in the area bordering Lake Niassa. Only 4.3 percent of the population has Portuguese as a mother tongue. Much of the population are Muslims (60.8 percent), followed by Catholics (26 percent), and Anglicans (4.0 percent) (INE 2010).



## 2.1 Lago, Majune and Cuamba

According to the Terms of Reference, three Districts were to be chosen for the implementation of the Reality Checks in Mozambique in order to “adequately reflect differences in structural constraints (such as access to services, infrastructure and economic opportunities) as well as political and social relationships (degree of importance of traditional vs. state institutions, degree of access to different types of social networks etc.)”. On this basis, we have selected the Municipality of Cuamba, the District of Lago and the District of Majune for further investigation (see Map 2). Cuamba is the economic hub of the province, affected by its proximity to the provinces of Nampula and Zambézia as well as to Malawi. The population is primarily Macua, and their economic activities focus around agriculture (including cash-crops like tobacco) and trade. Lago is a rural district, with the dominant Nyanja ethno-linguistic group pursuing a mixed adaptation of agriculture and fishing and with emerging new investments in tourism and coal mining. Majune is located in the interior of the province with no significant border relations, and the predominantly Yao-population primarily work in agriculture with few alternative sources of income and subsistence.

In official quantitative terms (INE 2010), the three Districts possess a set of social and economic characteristics that reveal their similarities and differences. As seen from Table 2, Cuamba is most populous followed by Lago and Majune. Cuamba generally comes out as the best-off and Majune as the poorest and most deprived district of the three – with the exception of bicycle ownership where Lago scores low primarily for ‘topographic’ reasons. Otherwise they share characteristics of a high proportion of households defined as female-headed. The indicators of poverty and well-being are important and frequently used in national and donor statistical accounts, and will be updated at the end of the Reality Checks project period when new comparative data will be available. However, we shall see that they only partially reflect people’s own perceptions of what it means to be ‘poor’ or ‘well-off’.

**Table 2: Social Indicators – Districts of Lago, Majune and Cuamba**

Social Indicators	Lago	Majune	Cuamba
Population	83,099	29,702	184,773*
Proportion Female Headed Households	35.1	35.2	24.0
Primary School Attendance	65.01	54.3	67.3
Solid Roof Housing	1.18	0.13	0.79
Electricity at Home	4.38	0.39	6.3
Radio ownership	67.5	45.0	55.0
Cell-phone	0.97	0.61	3.3
Bicycle Ownership	29.8	63.1	68.0

Source: INE 2009 \* Of this population, 79,779 lives in the Municipality of Cuamba.

The economic context in which people in the three districts develops their coping strategies and efforts for upward social mobility is reflected in Table 3. The data are taken from the District Economic and Social Plans and their reassessment (*Balanço*) that is the key policy-making instrument of the District Administrations. Also these data reveal differences between the three districts, both in their ability to collect these types of data, and in type and level of economic activities. Some differences are the natural outcome of differences in population (such as total agricultural production), and others by geographical distinctions (such as fish production and number of tourists), but some also indicate how each District Administration fulfils its responsibilities for developing their District (number of extension workers, investments in forestry, energy-clients, number of social security beneficiaries, the use of the 7 million MTn District development Fund etc.). Updated figures will be given in each Reality Check, in order to ascertain the Districts’ own representation of developments in their area of responsibility.

**Table 3: Economic Indicators – District of Lago, Majune and Cuamba**

Economic Indicator	Lago	Majune	Cuamba
Area under cultivation (Ha)	23,828	n.a.	101,474
Agricultural production (1000 kgs)	32,729	31,769	144,529
Agricultural extensionists (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter)	0	4	8
Farming associations	16	46	14
Production domestic animals (1000 kgs)	6673.7	n.a.	650
Forestation (New, number of trees)	6,050	5,000	156,092
Number of tourists	8,000	n.a.	0
Fish production (1000 kgs)	4780.8	0	n.a.
Commercial establishments	193	177	47
Public water sources	n.a.	92	n.a.
Energy (number of clients)	1,156	223	140
Energy (clients cut off)	497	n.a.	n.a.
INAS (Number of beneficiaries)*	682	648	2,722
District Dev. Fund (No. of Projects)	117	136	159
District Dev. Fund (Total, Mt)	7,062,844	7,517,000	7,604,199
Distr. Dev. Fund (Reimbursed, Mt)	300,000	562,500	1,500

Sources: GdN/DdLago, Majune and Cuamba 2010 \* These represent 0.82 (Lago), 2.18 (Majune) and 1.47 (Cuamba) percent of the District populations.

Before we start our journey to the three study sites, let us first reveal what the District Administrations see as their primary goals and challenges for their own district in the future.

For Lago, this is expressed as follows (GdN/DdLago 2010): *‘The main focus of the Government of the District of Lago for 2011 is [to] give priority to economic growth that will be reflected in the well-being of the population, [and] this development will be key in order to minimize the inequality between the communities. The Government will [also] continue to implement the Public Sector Reform, with emphasis on the well-being of the population and change of attitude and behaviour of the public servants and consequently an improvement of the quality of the services offered to the inhabitants [all] in order to secure a public administration that is transparent, efficient and responsible’.*

For Majune, the development goal is stated to be (GdN/DdMajune 2010): *‘Turn the District of Majune into a reference for the development of the districts that comprise the pole of the Marrupa Nuclear Area (Marrupa, Maúia and Majune). This should serve to promote local communities, thus warranting an improvement of living conditions through appropriate employment of available resources’.*

And for Cuamba, it is stated (GdN/DdCuamba 2010): *‘What we need to improve in the district are the roads, water distribution, healthcare network and conventional construction schools. It would also be good if we could improve the mobile network, so that all Administrative Posts could have access to communication. We are also improving the living conditions of the public officers’.*

## 2.2 Approaching the Study Sites

Carrying with us quantitative information and the districts development goals as outlined above, the three sub-teams travelled to the three study sites. Approaching Majune, the study-team writes (see ORGUT 2011b and d for similar descriptions for Lago and Cuamba):

“Niassa is a very sparsely populated province, and that becomes visible while travelling to Majune. We pass quite a few villages along the way but between the villages there are kilometers after kilometers of abundant land with no human settlement what so ever. No wonder that the wild life tends to take over the control of these lands. It is mid-September



and most of the villages are marked with colourful *capulanas* that have been raised as flags on house roofs and on tree tops. It is a sign of *unyago* celebration. In these houses there are children who have been to initiation rites and are now waiting to return home as full members of the community. *Unyago* implies several days of eating, drinking and dancing to celebrate the passage of the children into adulthood.

Right before getting to the Rio Luambala, the driver slows down the speed, switches off the car radio and takes off his cap. We are passing the tomb of the first ‘queen’ Bibi Achivanjila, who is seen as the main spiritual leader of Majune. The ‘queen’ passed away in the beginning of the 20th century and after her, the local population has appointed four successive ‘queens’ to carry on her legacy. Each one of them is named Bibi Achivanjila. The road takes us to the bridge that crosses over the Luambala-river; the bridge is also named after the much respected ‘queen’. Before the road rehabilitation, this used to be one of the most dangerous spots on the way to Lichinga, as the river had to be crossed with fragile, unsteady canoes. Many people are told to have lost their lives when crossing over the river. Today, the sturdy bridge saves us from such dangers, and the journey continues.



Dwellings and Flags in Majune  
Photo: Minna Tuominen

One of the striking features during our trip is the absence of trade along the roadside. There are no drinks, or fruits made available for the travellers; no tomatoes, small cookies, not even peanuts, that are typical food stuffs sold along most main roads across Mozambique. If anything, one can sometimes see next to the road large plastic sheets with maize flour spread on it, but even that is said to be for drying, not for sale. Clearly, the local population has not yet tapped into the commercial opportunities that the rehabilitated road offers. The car approaches Malanga, the district capital of Majune. In order to get there, we need to turn off from the main road and drive one kilometer along a dirt road. Luckily, it is not yet rainy season, and the dirt is dry and easily passable. It is early evening when we arrive. It is pitch dark, as there is no electricity in the district capital. As a matter in fact, there is no electricity in the whole district. A couple of solar panels offer meagre illumination into the few houses around the District Administration, but the rest of the district is swallowed by the darkness. There are hardly any people on the streets. Only crickets are chirping in this hot, black night. It is 7:30 on a Tuesday evening and the district of Majune is already sleeping.”

A central element in our endeavours to capture perceptions and relations of poverty and well-being in the three study-sites is to follow households selected from the different categories of poverty and well-being we have identified through the Wealth Ranking exercise (see Orgut 2011f and below). We will visit them, follow them in their daily routines, and hear them talk about their own perceptions of how their situation changes from year to year. There is a remarkable congruence between the three study-sites in the perceptions of these different categories, albeit phrased in different vernacular (*Nyanja*, *Yao* and *Macua*) and with different emphases. In general terms, people tend to distinguish between 3-4 levels of poverty and 2-3 categories of the better-off. Emphasis is given to the *combination* of material poverty and access to social relations with the extended family, neighbours, friends, traditional institutions as well as institutions of the state – thus combining issues of poverty and vulnerability.

One of these households in the Administrative Post of Meluluca in Lago is defined as *usuwedwa*, which is the very poorest category characterised by ‘completely depending on others’: The household consists of a single mother, one of her two children and the child of

an older sister who lives permanently with her. The household head's oldest daughter is 15, has a child and just moved in with a man in the neighbourhood. The house where Usuwedwa lives is made of burnt blocks of clay (*tijolo queimado*), has four rooms and a fenced backyard. In this case, however, the dwelling is a poor indicator of poverty and well-being: Usuwedwa is taking care of the dwelling for a younger brother who has just married and moved to his wife's place in Metangula, and Usuwedwa's real dwelling is a small shack in the yard. She has no contact with the fathers of her children, and never received any type of support (one of them is what she describes as a 'drunkard'). She has never gone to school, and her children stopped studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade 'as there was no money'. She has no *machamba* and makes a living by selling small *bolinhos* for 1 MTn a piece, has five chickens and two ducks, and gets fish in return when she 'rents' out the small shack where she used to live to fishermen.

In Cuamba, people were asked to portray through photographs what 'poverty' and 'well-being' meant to them in one of our many participatory exercises. The result can be seen in the following illustration:



'Poverty' and 'Well-Being' as seen from the poor in Cuamba  
 Photo selection: Local Population



### 3. THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Within each of the three Districts selected for the series of Reality Checks, specific communities have been identified in cooperation with the local District Authorities (Map 3; see Sub-Reports for closer descriptions).

In the **District of Lago**, one of the district's four Administrative Posts was selected. **Meluluca** is located in the southern part of the district, and was established in 2008 to 'substitute' the former Administrative Post Metangula which became a Municipality that year. Meluluca has a population of 8.500 people, scattered over a stretch of approximately 70 km in 15 different villages. The large majority lives in the vicinity of Lake Niassa. Meluluca has historically been isolated, with very poor road access and the Lake as the main means of transportation to other parts of the District or Malawi. Agriculture and fisheries have been the main sources of employment and income, with limited options for surplus production. Traditional authorities have had a strong position, with very few public institutions present and with poor education and health facilities. A new and improved road completed in 2008 'opened up' parts of the area and has – as we shall see – had strong implications for political and socio-economic developments in Meluluca. The southern part (from the village of Ucuongo and 40 km to the south) is still very isolated, and will be an important point of reference for understanding the implications of various development interventions.

**Majune** in the heart of Niassa Province is limited by the Mavago District in the north, N'gauma, Mandimba and Maúia in the south, Marrupa in the east and Muembe and Lichinga in the west. The latest National Census (2007) estimated the population of Majune at 29,700, and the population density is 3.28/km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Majune is divided up into three Administrative Posts: Malanga, Nairubi and Muequia. Of these Malanga, the district capital is the most populated one; according to the District Administrator, more than 80% of the district population lives in Malanga. Despite its central location, Majune was for many years isolated from both provincial urban centres, Lichinga and Cuamba, due to poor road conditions. It was only as late as 2003-2005 that the national road 14 (EN14) connecting Lichinga to Majune and Marrupa was rehabilitated and the physical isolation of the district was ended. The communities selected for closer study are the district capital **Malanga** and the village of **Malila** located 3 km south of Malanga.

The **District of Cuamba** is situated in the South of Niassa Province, some 300 km from the provincial capital Lichinga. Whilst Lichinga is the political capital of the province, Cuamba is the economic capital due to its location at the crossroads with Nampula and Zambézia provinces, and less than 100 km from the border with Malawi. Cuamba district has a total population of 184.000 inhabitants, and 43 percent of the district's population is concentrated in its capital Cuamba. The **Municipality of Cuamba** is divided into five localities and eleven 'bairros', with each bairro being divided into different '*povoados*' (population concentration). The Reality Check takes place in two of these localities. **Localidade 3** (Bairro do Aeroporto and Bairro Mutxora) was chosen because it is the most populated in the municipality, and **Localidade 4** (Bairro Maganga) was chosen because it is the farthest away from the city centre and – according to the municipal authorities – the one with the least developed level of services.

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<sup>3</sup> Census 2007/2008; Government of the District of Majune, 2007: Strategic Plan for the Development of Majune District. Horizonte 2007-2011.





### **Socio-Cultural Institutions**

Traditional and religious authorities have long historical roots and represent *continuity* for people in contexts like Lago, Majune and Cuamba – where formal political representations have shifted and where the government is only partially present in peoples' daily lives. The importance of tradition is also illustrated by the fact that 75.3 percent of the households practise 'ancestral cults' (the Baseline Survey).

**Chiefs and Queens** (*Régulos and rainhas*): Traditional roots and influence vary between the different leaders, but they share opinions about what their role is: To 'look after' their community; to allocate land; to perform rituals; and to relate to the government and visitors. The *régulos* and *rainhas* thus perform roles that are at the heart both of the lives and well-being of individual households and of the community at large. The position is hereditary within specific clans, matrilineages and extended families. *Régulos* who do not fulfil their roles properly or become sick are substituted by close relatives, often maternal uncles or younger brothers and sisters but never direct descendants.

**Advisors and Headmen** (*N'dunas*): The *régulos* and *rainhas* are assisted by advisors in order to be able to follow up their duties at the individual village/community level. Advisors are often close relatives (brothers or sisters) of the *régulo*, while *n'dunas* are selected from specific families with deep roots in the community in question. The advisors are often heads of the community courts that are said to "solve most of the conflicts we have". The *n'dunas* relate to smaller issues in his community, including the collection of the person tax, but will refer more serious cases/controversies to the *régulo*. The *chefes de povoação* as the lowest level of traditional authority are seen to have lost some of their influence and roles, but this may change as they have recently been recognised by the State (see below).

**Religious leaders:** According to the Baseline Study non-Muslims represent only two percent in Lago, and five percent in Majune, while Christians represent 64.2 percent in Cuamba. The Mosques have a central place in the former two areas, and the *chehes* are influential people not only in religious matters but also in the community at large. They emphasise the importance of praying, that people respect each other and that there is peace in the community.<sup>6</sup> Their influence is also strong through the Muslim schools or *madrassas* that practically all children attend from 4-5 years of age. And their economic clout can be exemplified by the construction of a large new brick Mosque in Lago/Meluluca. There are also Anglican and Catholic churches and church leaders in the three study-sites, but they only play a real role in Cuamba.



Traditional Leaders in Cuamba  
Photo: Carmeliza Rosário

### **Public Institutions**

The government structure in Mozambique is composed of i) **Central Government**, ii) **Provincial Government**, and iii) **District Government**. The political leadership at all these levels is appointed by the ruling party, which has been Frelimo since Independence. In addition, larger urban areas may be declared Municipalities, with their own Municipal

<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the Venn Diagram done in Lago/Meluluca explicitly stated that currently impact of the *chehes* is somewhat reduced due to 'infighting'...



elections (as Cuamba). The District Government has funding for its own staff, maintenance and infrastructure, but the largest government expenses in education, health, social protection etc. are channelled directly through the line ministries. In fact, the District Administrations underline how little room they actually have for responding to needs and queries in the communities they are to serve.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the District Administration, the government institutions present at the District level include a number of **District Directorates** such as the Directorates of Education, Youth and Technology and Health, Women and Social Action (both present in the local communities though schools and health posts); the Directorate of Economic Activities (agriculture, mining, tourism, fishing, industry); and the Directorate of Planning and Infrastructure. There are also representations of the National Institute for Social Action (INAS), the National Statistics Bureau INE (Cuamba), the District Police Commando and the Registry and Notary. As we shall see, however, many of these are either unknown to the local population or they do not know what kind of services they can offer. There is also a tendency that much of their services remain in the District Centre.<sup>8</sup>

For people in the communities under study, the most immediately accessible state institutions and the ones they perceive as representing 'the government' is the **Administrative Post** and the *Chefe do Posto*. According to the *Chefes do Posto* their main responsibility is to represent the government, inform the government about the needs of the community, and see to it that government policies and interventions are properly carried out. Each Administrative Post is divided into **Localities** or *Localidades*. They are formally to have a government representative, but this is not always the case. The Municipalities and larger villages are, finally, divided into village quarters or *bairros* with a *Secretário do Bairro*. He (there are no women with this task in the three sites) is in principle elected by the local population, but is *de facto* appointed by the Party. He also usually heads the Party Cell.

One special State institution that deserves particular attention is the **District Development Fund** or the so-called '7 million MTn'. This is a fund initiated in 2006, meant for the support of local initiatives for economic development and employment creation. Decisions are made through an elaborate application process involving Consultative Councils at the levels of the *Localidade*, Administrative Post and District – with the last mentioned having the final say. As seen from Table 1, 412 projects were given funding for a total of approximately 22 million MTn in 2011, which is a substantial amount of money. While the poor tend to complain that projects only 'go to the rich', the District Administrations on their part tend to argue that the money – which is equivalent to the total investment budget for the District of Lago, for example – had been better used for projects that 'concern many' such as tertiary roads and bridges.



Lago/Meluluca Administrative Post  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>7</sup> In the District of Lago, for example, the total 'free' budget available for 2011 is 7.800.000 Mtn which the District Administration tries to distribute evenly between the four Administrative Posts.

<sup>8</sup> In Lago, for example, none of the 682 beneficiaries of INAS social protection programmes in 2011 are from Meluluca Administrative Post – even though it represents more than 10 percent of the District's population.

## ***Institutional Overlaps***

The State and traditional institutions have different roles and responsibilities, with the former being responsible for 'formal' development interventions and the latter for the 'informal' well-being of the population. However, there is also a high degree of mutual dependence: The Government cannot implement their policies and interventions without the cooperation of traditional authorities, and the traditional authorities largely depend on tangible developments in their communities to retain their position. This has been recognised by the government, most concretely through two types of policies:

One is the **remuneration of traditional authorities** through the government payroll. *Régulos* and *rainhas* receive a tri-monthly payment of 2.400 Mtn or 800 Mtn per month (1<sup>st</sup> Scale), plus uniforms to be used at special occasions such as visits from provincial or central government. The *N'Dunas* receive a tri-monthly payment of 1.200 Mt or 400 Mt per month (2<sup>nd</sup> Scale). And very recently, the Village Heads or *Chefes de Povoação* have been recognised as the fifth tier of government and will receive remuneration in accordance with a 3<sup>rd</sup> Scale of 900 MTn per three months. The payment has variously been described as well-deserved remuneration for people who perform important tasks for the government, and as an attempt by government to co-opt the traditional authorities. Traditional leaders in Lago, Majune and Cuamba complain that they do not get their 'compensation' at regular intervals as envisaged, but acknowledge that they do get it 'in the end'.

The second way the public and traditional institutions 'overlap' is through the **Consultative Councils** of the District, the Administrative Post and the Locality. The Councils were established in 2008, with the objective of contributing to development in a broad sense. They usually have between 10 and 40 members (with a higher number the higher up in the hierarchy one gets), of whom most are traditional and religious leaders, members of civil society, members of the business community and local people 'of particular esteem'. 30 percent are supposed to be women, but this is not fulfilled in any of the three project sites. The Councils are usually headed by the government representative at the District, Post and Localidade level – which underlines the *de facto* influence these have in what is supposed to be a 'democratic' institution. In practise the main task of the councils has been to assess and approve applications from individuals and associations for the '7 million' scheme, to be submitted to the District Consultative Council for final approval or disapproval (see below). We will follow this process closely in subsequent reports.

While **Frelimo** as the dominant political party is not a 'public institution' as such, it is closely intertwined with the government authorities. The Party is *de facto* represented in the form of *Secretários do Bairro* particularly in the larger communities (see above). They are formally elected by the community, but actually selected by Frelimo that identify the candidate(s) they want. The *Secretários* also receive remuneration at the 1<sup>o</sup> *Escalão* level (see above), which according to community members taking part in the Mapping Exercise does not imply that they have the same impact as the traditional leaders. In areas where the opposition is believed to be strong the Bairro Secretaries are particularly active. In other less 'sensitive' areas their role is primarily related to mobilisation in the Party Cells (*Células do Partido*) around the time of elections or other major political events. Even though the opposition (Renamo and MPD) is quite strong in parts of Niassa, it is still rare to see open displays of opposition party affiliation in the form of flags etc.<sup>9</sup>

**Community Courts** are in the outset a traditional institution with the purpose to help solving community and domestic problems. They were originally headed by traditional leaders and/or elders with respect in the community, and were hence in a position to use traditional authorities (clan leaders, religious leaders, extended family heads etc.) to exert pressure for example in cases of compensation for adultery. This is still the case in Lago/Meluluca where

<sup>9</sup> In one particular case, a *povoação* was known to have a *N'duna* with strong Renamo sympathies who 'led' a large part of the population to vote Renamo. After a period with a strong Bairro Secretary the *N'duna* is gone and 'the problem has been fixed' as the Secretary put it.



the court is headed by the *rainhas* oldest brother, but in Majune the court is largely taken over by representatives of the State and the Party and has become ‘semi-official’ and acquired a different type of influence. No women take part in the court, according to one key informant in Majune because “women do not have the courage to participate in decision making”. The **community police** have a similar transitional role. Appointed by the community and ‘approved’ by the government (albeit without being paid), they are seen to lack the necessary traditional authority to carry out their task in a good way.

**Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)** also somehow find themselves in the interface between tradition, civil society and the state. They are usually funded by foreign governments; are more directly involved with local communities than bilateral aid-organisations; and usually fill ‘gaps’ in government service provision.<sup>10</sup> Despite a strong overall presence of NGOs in Niassa (see Orgut 2011a), their presence in the three study-sites vary considerably. In the District of Lago, only the Mozambican NGO ‘Estamos’ (working with HIV-AIDS) has a permanent presence. In Meluluca there is no NGO-presence at all. Concern was instrumental for supporting the new road in 2008 but withdrew in 2009, and WWF is only indirectly present through on-going attempts to introduce a new fisheries management scheme in Lake Niassa. In Cuamba there are a few NGOs primarily working with support to farming activities (FORASC, FHI, PROMER). And finally in Majune there are quite a few NGOs, including Conselho Cristão de Moçambique, Mundukide, Ibis, Concern Universal and União de Camponeses. Most of them work in the area of good governance and building the capacity of citizens to monitor the performance of the local government. In that sense the NGOs have been important eye-openers in Majune, and they have succeeded in stirring discussions about democracy and citizens’ participation in local governance.

### **Private Sector**

Historically in Niassa companies buying agricultural products, most notably tobacco and cotton, have been the most important representatives of the private sector. More recently, private forestry companies make their mark in large parts of the province by buying up land and planting pine-trees. There are also emerging international interests in coal-mining and tourism/wildlife.<sup>11</sup>

The presence and impact of the private sector in the three study-sites vary considerably. In Lago/Meluluca, none of the larger companies buying agricultural products and planting forests are present – according to the local population because the sandy soil does not support tobacco production, their land areas are too small and because ‘our régulos refused to give land to the forestry companies’. The most prominent private sector presence is the Mbuna Bay Lodge (in Ngolongue, see Map 3), which employs a large part of the village population of 331 people and has supported the establishment of a Health Post and the renovation of a primary school. In Majune, there are active private sector companies such as the Mozambique Leaf Tobacco (MLT), Luambala Jatropha, Tenga Lda. that produce *macadamia* nuts and Majune Safari working with tourism and wildlife. Although these companies employ local labour, the vast majority of the local workforce is still unemployed or restricted to family farming (see below). In Cuamba, tobacco and cotton companies have a



Village and Forest, Lago  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>10</sup> The most influential NGO in Niassa is currently Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC), which works with local civil society organisations.

<sup>11</sup> Sweden has supported the private sector in Niassa through the Malonda Foundation.

much stronger presence and there are a larger number of private sector employment opportunities following from the position of Cuamba as the economic hub of the province. However, the relation is currently marked by conflicts as the tobacco companies – as the local population sees it – are not buying their products or buy at a too low price (see the Cuamba Sub-Report for more details).

To assess the importance of the different institutions in the communities, the **Venn Diagram Exercise** (ORGUT 2011a) clearly indicated that the traditional institutions are considered most important in peoples' lives. In all three project sites the *régulo* or the *rainha* came out as most influential, often followed by leaders of community based institutions such as imams or *chehes*. Government institutions were generally considered of less importance, with the exception of the Bairro Secretary who to some extent has 'substituted' the traditional authorities particularly in Cuamba.

The relative importance of the different institutions for the local population is also captured in the **Baseline Survey**, showing the proportion of households that have contacted and used traditional and public institutions the past six months prior to the survey (Table 4). As can be seen, people primarily relate to the Chief (Régulo) and the Village Head (N'duna), with the 'state representatives' in the form of Head of the Administrative Post and the Bairro Secretary being somewhat less important. Equally significant is the fact that while people in Lago consult traditional as well as public authorities with relatively high frequency, people in (peri-)urban Cuamba do so with considerably lower frequency which is likely to reflect a lower level of trust in the interest and ability of such institutions to help out.



Venn Diagram by Male Focus Group, Cuamba Photo: Carmeliza Rosário

**Table 4.** Proportion of Households Using Key Public and Traditional Institutions Six Month Prior to Interview (Percent)

Institution	Lago	Majune	Cuamba
District Administrator	5.0	3.3	2.5
Head of Administrative Post	12.5	1.7	0.0
Chief ( <i>Régulo</i> )	36.7	10.8	5.0
Village Head ( <i>N'Duna</i> )	19.2	1.6	1.6
Bairro Secretary	23.3	5.8	6.7
Head of Party Cell	0.8	4.2	1.7
Police (incl. Community Police)	1.7	5.8	5.0
Head of Mosque ( <i>Chehe</i> )	10.8	13.3	0.0
Traditional doctors ( <i>Curandeiros</i> )	5.8	4.2	0.8
Others	4.1	2.5	1.6

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

### 3.2 Main Problems in the Community

The overall data for Niassa presented in the initial part of this report reveal a situation of improvements in consumption-based poverty, and socio-economic indicators varying around the national average. Through the **Most Important Problems Exercise** (ORGUT 2011a), focus groups in the three study sites were asked to list the most important problems in the community and then to cast votes as to i) the proportion of the population affected by them and ii) the seriousness of the problem at hand. As appears from the Table 5 below, the problems centre around access to basic services such as health, education and water but also reveal local peculiarities of Lago, Majune and Cuamba respectively. Below we will give a snapshot of these problems as they were outlined to us in the three communities, referring again to the Sub-Reports for more details.

**Table 5. Main Community Problems (votes)**

Problems Lago	Votes	Problems Majune	Votes	Problems Cuamba	Votes
Poor Water Quality	22	Lack of Water	20	Lack of Water	10
Poor Health Facilities	22	Conflicts Man-Animal	20	Poor Health Facilities	10
Lack of Energy	22	Lack of Employment	20	Poor Roads	9
Only Primary School	17	Lack of Local Markets	10	Crime	9
Poor Roads	17	Lack of Electricity	10	Unemployment	8

Source: RC Mozambique Most Important Problems Exercise 2011

**Water** access is seen as a major problem in both Majune and Cuamba, and contaminated water is seen as a major problem in Lago/Meluluca. There are only a total of 10 water-posts in the Meluluca A.P. for a population of 8.500 people, and in Meluluca Sede with the highest population concentration there is only one post that is functioning. According to the Baseline Survey, 48 percent of the households use a water-post, 13 percent use wells and 39 percent depends on the Lake for drinking – as well as for washing, fishing and other activities. In both Majune and Cuamba the main source of water is wells, for 64.2 and 70.0 percent of the households respectively.

**Health Posts** and the quality of health services vary considerably in the three sites. In Majune there are well-developed health facilities, while both in Cuamba and Lago/Meluluca health services were listed among the main community problems. In fact, the Majune health centre appears to be a model case of well-run rural health services (see the Majune Sub-Report for more details). The Health Post in Meluluca opened in 2008. It has a clinic in very poor conditions; a solar panel only manages to maintain storage for medicines; and access to medicines is often inadequate. The maternity ward has no electricity, and according to the nurse working there they have to turn away women who come to give birth at night without their own source of illumination. The large majority of the households in Lago had at least one sick member two weeks prior to the Baseline Survey, with as many as 73.3 percent having members with malaria and 36.7 percent with vomits or diarrhoea. The equivalent figures for Majune were 64.2 and 22.5 percent and for Cuamba 55.0 and 20.8 percent. Still according to the Baseline Survey, 25 percent of the households in Lago have seen at least one of their children die before the age of five with the equivalent figures for Majune being



Nurse at Work, Lago  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

22.5 percent and for Cuamba 21.7 percent.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding **Energy**, there is no electricity in Lago/Meluluca nor in Majune, but a few households have solar panels. People have high expectations that electricity will come from Cahora Bassa, but according to the District Administration there are no immediate plans for this. According to the Baseline Survey, the main source of illumination among households in Lago and Majune are kerosene lamps or '*lanternas*' (94.2 and 85.5 percent). The main complaints in the communities are that the dark makes it difficult to walk freely around in the villages that children cannot study at

night, and that lack of electricity "stops development". In Cuamba that does have electricity, 25.0 percent of the households are actually connected.

The coverage of **Primary Schools** is relatively good in the three study-sites. At the same time, the schools vary considerably in the quality of physical structures, access to educational material and human resources. Some pupils are taught under trees and without chairs and desks; there are examples where only 20 percent of the pupils in a class have books; and it is problematic to attract and retain qualified teachers. There are also a large proportion of children who do not go to school at all. In one case, the headmaster estimated that out of the children eligible to start 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in 2011, only 60 percent showed up and there are dramatic drops in participation both annually (girls tend to drop out at puberty) and seasonally (boys tend not to show up e.g. at certain fishing seasons). Most children go to *madrassas* (Muslim schools), but they only teach religious disciplines.

These data indicate a primary school attendance rate that is much lower than what is reported in official documents. In the Baseline Survey as many as 31.8 percent of the households reported that they had children at school age that did not go to school. Teachers and parents alike indicate that the problem is a combination of lack of interest from households and a school that does not really relate to the children – with Portuguese as the language of instruction being a particularly serious problem in an area where hardly anyone speaks the language.<sup>13</sup>

**Roads** are puzzling. In Majune, the National Road N14 was rehabilitated six-seven years ago and greatly improved connections to Lichinga, Marrupa and Cabo Delgado (see Map 2). However, there are very few if any visible economic implications of this improvement. People argue that the new connection with the urban hub Cuamba (including a new bridge, see illustration front page) will be more important, as it will give more direct access to markets and commodities. In Lago/Meluluca, on the other hand, the opening of the new road from Metangula has been very important for developments in the community. The road has greatly enhanced commercial relations between Meluluca, the District and Malawi and been a major factor behind the expansion in the fishery sector, the improved access to goods and commodities and – as we shall see – increasing inequalities in the community. In Cuamba, roads and the railroad have been at the very heart of economic developments.

<sup>12</sup>The Health Post in Lago reports that they have no cases of HIV-AIDS, but admits that people suspecting the disease are likely to go outside the community for tests to avoid local stigma and marginalisation.

<sup>13</sup> Several schools in Meluluca are involved in what is called a 'bilingual project', where Portuguese will be combined with Nyanja. We will follow this up in subsequent Reality Checks.



**Wildlife** is listed as one of the main problems in Majune, which is surrounded by huge and sparsely populated tracts of land and with the National Park nearby. The problem is primarily that elephants enter *machambas* and destroy crops. A special variations of such a conflict is emerging in Lago/Meluluca, where the Government/World Wildlife Fund recently have established a Conservation Act that is meant to limit peoples' access to fishing grounds.

People in Majune also complain about **lack of local markets** for sale of agricultural products, and argue that much of their crops are rotting because they do not have buyers. This is, as we have seen, in stark contrast to Lago where not only a local market has developed following the construction of the road but where also external *comerciantes* appear to buy products. **Lack of formal employment** is also seen as a problem in Majune and Cuamba – but not in Lago/Meluluca where there are no formal employment opportunities and people do not see it as relevant. In Majune there are a few employment opportunities with commercial farmers, safari- and hunting companies and seasonal jobs for the National Roads Administration. And in Cuamba there are jobs for commercial farmers and various other commercial outlets – but clearly not enough as seen from the local communities. Finally **crime** is highlighted as a problem in Cuamba, which is likely to be the outcome of the urban characteristic and large number of people passing through the Municipality.

### 3.3 Economic Adaptations

Economic life in Lago, Majune and Cuamba is first and foremost about agriculture. As seen from Table 5 below taken from the Baseline Survey, a total of 56.1 percent of the household heads have agriculture as their main source of subsistence and income. Fishing is the most important alternative source of income in Lago (for 25.8 percent) and self-employment in Cuamba (11.9 percent). Formal employment in the public and private sector is most common in Majune, where a relatively high proportion of the household heads are employed in the public sector (mainly health and education). Below we will give a brief description of the main sources of employment, referring again to the Sub-Reports for more detailed assessments.

**Table 6. Main Occupation of Household Heads (Percent)**

Institution	Lago	Majune	Cuamba
Formal Employment Public Sector	0.8	13.3	7.5
Formal Employment Private sector	0.8	5.8	9.2
Farmer	49.2	60.8	58.3
Fisherman	25.8	3.3	0.0
Self-employed with staff	5.8	0.8	2.5
Self-employed without staff	15.0	5.8	15.0
Occasional/seasonal employment	0.0	0.8	0.8
Student	0.0	0.0	0.8
Pensioner	0.8	9.2	1.7
Unemployed	0.8	0.0	2.5
Domestic	0.8	0.0	1.7

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

**Agriculture** is the most important source of subsistence and income for 56.1 percent of the households, with all households having access to at least one agricultural field or *machamba*. 47.4 percent of the households sell parts of their agricultural production, without significant variations between the three study sites. Most *machambas* are located inland and are rainfed, but there is also a system of more valuable land being inundated by water from the rivers. In the agricultural season women and children (and men when clearing fields or other 'male' tasks) tend to leave early in the morning at around 4-5 o'clock, and stay until the

sun becomes too unbearable between 09.00 and 10.00 hours – only to go back again in the afternoon until it gets dark. The main products are (in order of the proportion of households producing them) maize (93.3 percent), cassava or *mandioca* (76.5 percent), and sweet potato (55 percent). Additional crops produced (still in order of importance) are squash, rice, tomato, peanuts, beans, banana and sesame. The most salient feature of agriculture is low production and the very low proportion of households that use any type of improved agricultural technologies or fertilisers except for crop rotation (pers.comm. Directorate of Economic Activities). Most households have small domestic animals such as chickens (60 percent), some have ducks (28 percent) and goats (18 percent, only slaughtered for ceremonies), while only 1.9 percent of the households have cattle that are most valuable economically.

While agriculture dominates production for subsistence and income, there are also a number of **informal economic activities**. 70 percent of the households in the Baseline Survey are involved in such alternatives (varying between 71.7 in Lago and 68.3 in Cuamba). They include small scale traders (selling mainly agricultural products along roads and outside dwellings); traders (usually selling basic consumer goods such as flour, sugar, cooking oil and soap from marketing stalls or 'bancas'); *comerciantes* with shops or '*lojas*' having a larger variety of goods and commodities; production and sale of firewood or (much more rarely) coal; producers of clay blocks or *tijolos* that is the most common building material; carpenters (usually on a small scale producing doors, window-frames and agricultural tools such as *enxada*, *machado* and *charrua*); tailors (who tend to mend old rather than produce new clothes); people producing basic utensils such as mats (*esteiras*), pots and pans; people doing traditional medicine (*curandeiros*) and finally piecemeal work (*ganho ganho*) in the fields or homes of others. People argue that households who do not have alternative sources of income outside agriculture are often the poorest and most vulnerable – in particular during the months prior to harvest or what people call the 'pockets of hunger' ('*bolsos do fome*') when provisions from the previous agricultural season are running out.

Entering Lago and Lake Niassa, it all seems to be about **fishing**. The shoreline is filled with *chatas* (small boats with outboard engines) and canoes made out of trunks; fish is dried on huge stalls; and outside dwellings men mend large fishing nets. When fish is landed early in the morning or late at night, the beach is full of people. However, fishing is also a source of subsistence and income showing large variations between seasons and fishermen. At the time of our fieldwork, the famous Lake Niassa *uusipa* – being an indigenous sardine specie – dominated the scene. The best boats caught up to 70 buckets of fish during a night, while others caught nothing.<sup>14</sup> Some of the owners (*patrões*) of boats and nets are influential and well-off people, while others (*marinheiros*) complain "*somos cansados de pescar. É muito trabalho e pouco rendimento*" ("we are tired of fishing. It is a lot of work with little pay"). According to the Baseline Survey, 26 percent of the households in Lago/Meluluca have fisheries as their main source of subsistence income and 57 percent are involved in production, processing or marketing in some way or another. Of those involved, as many as 85 percent sell fish. Also in Majune fishing is important, but mainly on a seasonal basis in rivers and on a smaller scale.

Even though the economic adaptations in all three project sites are dominated by agriculture and fisheries and supplemented by informal economic activities, there are curious differences in economic dynamics. In Majune, the district capital of Malanga and the village of Malila boast a small economy characterized by reduced circulation of money and products, and dominated by informal vendors that are mainly restricted to the local market. A financial system based on bartering still prevails, i.e. families exchange the produce from their *machambas* for other products or goods. In the Malanga village, because it is slightly more urban than the Malila community and is inhabited by public officials, there is some money circulation. However the availability of products is scarce – both agricultural products and industrial / processed goods – for purchase in the local market (see illustration below).

<sup>14</sup> Being a good fisherman requires superior skills in reading the moon and the currents, as well as a good crew.





Shop in Lago, Market in Majune  
Photo: Inge Tvedten and Minna Tuominen

In Lago, the increased presence of money has contributed to Meluluca becoming a more 'commoditised' community, with a number of marketing stalls and small shops selling goods that until 2008 were only accessible in Metangula, in Lichinga or in Malawi. Moreover, Meluluca Sede has become interesting also for external traders – most notably through the monthly appearance of what can perhaps best be described as a 'travelling market' (with the local name '*Campepuza*'). Traders mainly from Lichinga sell all kinds of products for 'bulk' prices that are lower than what most of the local traders, who buy their goods in much smaller quantities, can offer. There are also other signs of increased economic wealth: A large number of houses are under construction or repair; some people have small motorcycles, the number of bicycles is increasing (even though still owned only by 35 percent of the households); and rumour has it that there are people from Meluluca who have moved to Metangula and bought a car.

Moving around in the villages, however, it is equally clear that far from everybody has benefited from recent economic developments. It is rare to see adults or children with physical signs of extreme poverty (lifeless eyes, 'burnt' hair, swollen legs), but many houses are of poor standard and are made of unburnt clay (which makes them precarious and – after a while – in danger of collapsing); women and children in front of the dwelling primarily prepare *mandioca* directly from the field (which is a sign of poverty); when people receive visitors they go and get a weed mat (*esteira*) or a simple brick (rather than chairs which is a sign of well-being and fulfils local expectations of hospitality); and there are 'destitutes' in very poor conditions in terms of clothes and general appearance. As seen from Table 7 below, the Baseline Study confirms that there are considerable differences in poverty and well-being between the three project sites – even though cases of extreme need seem to be rare. The perhaps most important indicator of extreme poverty is not having a mat (*esteira*) to offer visitors, which is most common in Majune: It violates deep cultural perceptions of hospitality and is seen by the community as a sign of social marginalisation and destitution.

**Table 7. Key Socio-Economic Indicators (Income, Expenditure and Assets)**

Indicator	Lago	Majune	Cuamba
HHS selling agricultural products	43.3	50.9	48.5
HHS selling fish	49.1	19.1	4.1
HHS spending less than 250 MTn per week	36.6	41.7	48.2
HHS spending more than 1000 MTn per week	20.1	17.5	13.3
HHS with radio	67.5	45.0	55.0
HHS with telephone	33.3	30.8	32.5
HHS with bicycle	35.0	50.8	60.8
HHS <i>without</i> 'esteira'	5.8	25.0	2.5

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

### 3.4 Socio-Economic Categories and Focus Households

People in the three project sites have clear perceptions about different levels of poverty and well-being. Their definitions tend to take two issues into account: The level of material poverty, and social relationships – or the extent to which a household or an individual is involved in social networks or is socially isolated. The latter relates directly to the issue of vulnerability, or how the household or the individual will be able to cope with a situation of sudden shocks such as loss of income or extraordinary expenses for example related to death or illness. More concretely, the **Wealth Ranking** exercise carried out for this study revealed that people in the three project sites distinguish 2-4 levels of poverty and 1-3 levels of well-being in Lago (*Nyanja*), Majune (*Yao*) and Cuamba (*Macua*). We present these below, and will refer to them throughout the series of Reality Checks.

**Table 8a:** Levels and Characteristics of Poverty and Well-Being in Lago (*Nyanja*)

The Poor	
<i>Usuwedwa</i>	People who do not have money, and no clothes. They are not in a position to marry because they do not have the necessary material means and no one wants to marry them. They depend on others.
<i>Chilecua</i>	Men and women who are lazy ( <i>preguiçosos</i> ), and who do not contribute anything to the community.
<i>Maciquine</i>	Men and women with physical or mental deficiencies.
<i>Ukalama</i>	Older men and women who do not have support from their family because no one is close to help.
The Better-Off	
<i>Odjifunila</i>	People who manage well ( <i>desenrascar</i> ) in their daily life, and who do not depend on others.
<i>Opata</i>	People who are in a position to give informal employment ( <i>biscatos</i> ) to other people in agriculture, fisheries and construction.
<i>Olemela</i>	People who have a car, who have companies in (Metangula), who pay fixed [monthly] salaries to their employees, who have a bank-account and who sell products coming from Malawi and Tanzania.

**Table 8b:** Levels and Characteristics of Poverty and Well-Being in Majune (*Yao*)

The Poor	
<i>Mazikine</i>	People who “have no <i>machamba</i> , no place to sleep, no blanket, nothing”. The <i>mazikine</i> “do not get any harvest, and do not have money”. “They eat at other people’s houses” and thus, the <i>mazikine</i> “live like animals”.
<i>Wakulaga</i>	People who cultivate <i>machamba</i> and sustain themselves through their own production. A rather broad category that covers the majority of the people in Malila, common community members, but also very vulnerable families.
The Better-Off	
<i>Wakupatha</i>	The richest group of people “who live in a house with furniture” and who “own a car or a motorbike”. <i>Wakupathas</i> “own lots of things” and they do not need to do farming, as “they can afford to buy their maize.”

**Table 8c: Levels and Characteristics of Poverty and Well-Being in Cuamba (Macua)**

The Poor	
<i>Ohawa vanchipali</i>	The very poor. Those who don't know how or where they are going to get their next meal.
<i>Ohawa ovelavela</i>	The relatively poor. Those who have no initiative to take themselves out of poverty.
<i>Ohawa vakanene</i>	The transitional poor. Those who have at least two meals a day.
The Better-Off	
<i>Opunha</i>	The 'wanna be' rich. Those who enjoy life without being necessarily rich.
<i>Okhalano</i>	The truly rich. Those who have it all.

To systematically pursue the socio-economic and cultural implications of each of these categories, we have identified altogether 20 individual households that belong to each one of them. These will represent a 'panel of households' (see ToR) that we will follow closely throughout the Reality Checks. Here we will only give a brief presentation of one household from each of the categories presented above, coming back to them in more detail and assess changes in their poverty and well-being as we move along in the study-series.<sup>15</sup>

### Lago/Meluluca

**Usuwedwa.** The household lives in Milombe, in a small house with only one room. The couple has six children from two months to 19 years of age. They have two *machambas* in the rainfed area that barely produce enough for consumption. In addition, the husband makes and repairs agricultural tools and doors made out of bamboo – for which there is limited requests and which pays poorly. The children go to school “sometimes”, with the exception of the oldest boy who has always been interested and has received family support to start 8<sup>th</sup> Grade in Metangula. The husband claims his family has always been poor, and underlines this by saying that they “never had the means to leave Meluluca” even in times of war when most people did so. He has no relatives left. The wife’s father died in the civil war ('guerra familiar'), her mother from malaria and all her three brothers are also dead. The one person they rely on in times of crisis is the wife’s uncle (the brother of her diseased mother), who lives close by.



Woman at Work in Lago  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

**Chilecua.** The household lives in Lussefa, and consists of a young girl of approximately 15 years (she does not know how old she is), a child of 3 months (her first child died when it was three months) and a husband who is usually out travelling 'dancing and playing drums' (as he was when we met the household). They married traditionally in the mosque. Their dwelling is small and in poor conditions. Close by Chilecua lives her mother, who has three children with three different men. She has never received support from any of them. Also her

<sup>15</sup> As is our experience from other parts of Mozambique, people in the focus groups readily identify households and the households identified do not mind – with the partial exception of the best-off households where people fear the identification may put them in discredit or provoke witchcraft or sorcery (*ufiti*). For the sake of anonymity, only fictive names will be used and each family is located in another village than where it actually lives. None of the households are represented in the photos included in this report.

grandmother lives close by. Her husband divorced her ‘*many years ago*’, and she has seen five of her seven children die. The three households live separately and claim they do not ‘eat from the same pot’ as they do not have anything to share. Neither do they have *machambas*. According to Chilecuas’s mother the *rainha* does not want to give them any, but according to her mother again she does not want to work. Their main source of income seems to be from *ganho-ganho*, primarily by helping out with small chores in the houses of others for which they receive pay either in cash or kind.

**Maciquine.** ‘Maciquine’ lives alone with a heavily handicapped boy of around eight years of age. Their one-room dwelling is nearly falling apart, and the grass roof has large holes in it. She has a total of five children, with the other four being married and living elsewhere in Meluluca. Her fortunes changed in 2009, when her husband died and she lost her main source of support. The dwelling where she used to live was taken over by her oldest son and his family, and she moved closer to her oldest brother’s oldest son – who she realised was the only one who could help her as her own children “are all poor”. While ‘Maciquine’ has access to a *machamba*, she does not really produce as she cannot leave her son alone. Her main source of income is a few chickens, and she makes mats (*esteiras*) when she can get hold of the material. When Maciquine has real difficulties she turns to her nephew (*sobrinho*) for help. Her neighbours, she says, can only afford to give “moral support”.

**Ukalama.** The household consists of two elders living in a poor one-room dwelling, and they have a small *machamba* as their main source of subsistence and income. Their field is far away, and as they are old they do not have the strength to work much. They only produce *mandioca*, which requires the least work and care – even if they are aware that it is not a very nutritious crop. In addition to themselves, they also have the *de facto* responsibility for several grandchildren who come to stay with them for longer or shorter periods of time. Their four children are all poor and largely in the same situation as their parents. Two live with their families in Metangula and two in Meluluca, and they tend to send their children to Meluluca when things (or their children...) become difficult. One granddaughter was present the day we visited the family, saying she wanted to stay ‘to help out’ and because it was nice to stay with the grandmother (*avo*). Their access to food improves sometimes with the help of the wife’s oldest brother’s oldest son who lives in Metangula: He has given them a fishing net that is used by others, and which gives the rights to a part of the catch.

**Odjifunila.** The husband is 46 years old, lives in Nchepa/Ngala, and has two wives and a total of 15 children. With his first wife he lives in a compound with two dwellings and an additional one under construction. His second wife – with whom he lives every second week – has a similar living arrangement. Odjifunila reached 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, and claims he grew up under poor conditions moving between Meluluca and Malawi where he started out fishing with his uncle. Returning to Meluluca after the ‘family war’ he worked hard in his *machambas* where he produced *mandioca* as well as ‘fine maize (*mahele*)’, and he ended up being able to start selling fish – and marrying a second wife. His business received a boost in 2008 when he joined an association and obtained funding from the 7 million scheme of 8.000 Mtn, which he used to expand his business. In 2010 his first wife also got involved in commercialisation of fish – again with a loan from the 7 million scheme. Odjifunila sends all his children to school in Meluluca or Metangula, with the oldest from the first wife attending the Pedagogic University in Lichinga. Odjifunila has a large extended family, with a mother and four married sisters living nearby. He also has married brothers, but they live further away in the compounds of their wives. Odjifunila claims he has close contact with his relatives, but also emphasises that he is independent and manages on his own.



**Opata.** 'Opata' left, as so many in Meluluca, for Malawi at long and regular intervals during the two wars. He also got married in Malawi. Returning in 1995, he started out producing tobacco which gave sufficient income to start other small businesses. One was to sell dried fish and the other sarongs or *capulanas* - in both cases using his contacts in Malawi. The business went well, and Opata eventually managed to invest in larger boats and cattle. He currently has a total of five motorised boats, each with crews of between 3 and 12 people depending on the type of fishing. He also has over 30 heads of cattle and 15 goats. Until he received a



The Meal of the Day for Poor Households in Majune  
Photo: Minna Tuominen

contribution from the 7 million scheme in 2011, he claims he was all 'self-made'. His economic success has also had social implications: He has expanded his family and has a total of four wives and 20 children between 23 years and one month of age. Opata is still seeking to expand his business, and his plan is to buy a car and start with transportation.

### **Majune**

**Wakulaga:** This poor woman has three children and lives in her sister's home together with her sister's family (husband and children). She is disabled, as she broke one of her feet during the Mozambican civil war and has since then had a severe limp. She was married to a soldier from Maputo, who returned home after the end of the war. She refused to move to Maputo with her husband because she thought life would be hard for her there due to her physical condition. Life in her sister's house is difficult as her sister also has to take care of her own family. The woman lives in a one bedroom house built by one of her nephews in her sister's yard. She owns a small *machamba*, for subsistence purposes, where she cultivates maize and sorghum which can feed her and her children for only six months. She is a lonely and sick woman that has lost all hope and depends on the willingness of her younger sister to pay for medical treatment. To get to the nearest health facility she has to walk for almost 12 km and it takes her almost a full day due to her physical disability. She does not receive any help from any public or private institutions; nor does she have any informal relations to help her in critical moments of her life.

**Wakulaga:** This poor household is comprised of six people; the head of household is a widow in her fifties. Her daughter and four grandchildren live with her. Her daughter is mute and also seems to have some mental deficiencies. Her daughter has never been married due to her mental condition, but has had kids with 'unknown' men. The household head lives in miserable conditions and depends on other people's willingness to help her by giving her food, goods or money to feed her family. She has two other sons that are married and who sometimes help her out. In her everyday life she has almost nothing to do besides walking from door to door asking for food and money to support her family. When she was married, life was much easier than it is now. She had respect, dignity and a *machamba*. Now there are no job prospective for her and if she were to have a *machamba* she wouldn't be able to work on it because she is too weak and has nobody to help her. She doesn't have any hope and also her daughter depends on her ability to find help in the neighbourhood. There is uncertainty regarding her family's future in case something bad happens to the current head.

**Mazikine:** This is an old, disabled and lonely man that injured one of his legs when he was a child. He was married and his life went well, until the day that he was contracted a strange disease that made him blind. Because of his health condition, his wife left home and he stayed alone without help. Some sisters of the Catholic Church helped him and he recovered his vision, but neither did his wife return home nor did his economic condition improve. He can't work in the *machamba* and therefore has to depend on the community's help to eat. However, despite his physical condition he has some informal jobs where he fixes people's buckets and pots. He is also an important member of the community leadership working as head of his block (*quarterão*), responding to the *Secretário do Partido Frelimo* in the community. He lives in a small house with a single division, and with only one piece of furniture which is his bed made by sticks.

**Wakupatha pa nandi:** She is from Nampula city and is married with a local man whose family used to be a wealthy family in Majune district during the colonial period. She is a housewife and has three children; the elder ones are studying in Lichinga and the youngest one lives with her and her husband in Majune. Her husband owns a truck which he uses to transport people and goods every day to Lichinga. She owns a *machamba* and has hired workers to cultivate for her. Recently she started a small business where she sells cell phone credit in the community and also charges people for recharging their cell phone batteries, as she has electricity in her house. She also charges tickets for those who want to watch television, especially during football match days. Due to the profits earned from her business, she has been able to build a house in Nampula city and open and maintain a bank account. She uses the money from her bank account to help her husband when the transportation business is in low season.

**Wakupatha:** This rich man lives in the centre of Malanga Sede, which is in the District capital. He runs several different businesses, including a shop/bar, a guest house, a construction company and transportation services. He also owns several cars and has two houses, one in Malanga Sede and another one in Lichinga. Contrary to the vast majority of the local population, he does not engage in farming. He also has two wives that help him manage the family business. He is originally from Inhambane province and went to Majune for military service. When he first moved to Majune, there weren't any businesses in the district and he had to start everything from scratch. This allowed him to become the most successful entrepreneur in the district. He maintains a close relationship with the local government, in order to have contracts for building projects in the district. The district owes him more than 3 million Meticaís, as he was the sole provider of electricity in the district and has supplied government buildings without being paid for the services. In the near future he wishes to become the most successful and recognised businessman not only in the district – but perhaps also in the province.

## **Cuamba**

**Ohawa vanchipali.** This very poor man is originally from Nampula. He is in his 70s. He was brought to Cuamba in his youth, to work for a cotton processing factory. He had a wife, with whom he has lived most of his life. At a certain point her relatives took her away. He then married a second woman, with whom he had only one daughter who is ill. She has been married, but is now separated. When the household head still had his strength he sent his second wife away, effectively separating from her. Her daughters from her first marriage took her in. He then became blind and asked for refuge near his ex-wife. She did not want to take him in. But their daughter took pity on him. He now lives in a house his daughter's ex-husband was made to build for her after their separation. The only person he has to tend for him is his ill daughter, who can barely take care of herself. He used to receive support from INAS, but the support was interrupted. It is going to take a while before he is readmitted into the list of beneficiaries. His second ex-wife still has enough strength to go to the 'machamba'.

When she can, she helps the daughter and the ex-husband, but she is dissatisfied that he is now resorting to her, when it was him who sent her away in the first place.

**Ohawa vanchipali.** This very poor woman is an older lady, born in Malema. She is Muslim, though the rest of the household is Christian. She has never studied. She has been married once, but her husband disappeared after he went on a business trip to Zimbabwe. The household head has three daughters, 14 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. She lives with the younger daughter, the grandchildren, one great-grandchild and the husband of one of the granddaughters. The eldest daughter lives mostly by the machamba, while the third lives nearby. The daughter that lives with her is separated and has four children. It is the eldest of her daughters that is married and has the child in her grandmother's household. She stopped studying when she became pregnant. The household primarily survives on subsistence agriculture, but the son-in-law provides some support at home. They produce maize, peas, beans, squash, okra, cassava, sorghum and sesame. Of these they manage to sell maize flour. When the production and income is not enough to make ends meet, the other daughters and neighbour's help with food and material goods.

**Ohawa vakanivakani.** The relatively poor couple is in their sixties. The husband has recessive leprosy, and she has a limp which prevents her from walking long distances. They live off hand-outs from neighbours and good willing city dwellers, as well as INAS support. They have four children, two girls and two boys. The eldest daughter is separated from her husband, has 3 children and lives in the back of her parents' yard. She survives on brewing traditional drinks. The youngest daughter is married and lives away from her parents, but in the same 'bairro'. The boys are in school. The eldest lives out of 'pwati' or small-scale occasional work. They moved to Cuamba because of the war, but had already been married in her hometown. The only one who can produce is the man, even though with some limitations. He says that when he was younger he could go to the 'machamba' without problems. But after independence the leprosy began and he started losing his fingers, which made producing more difficult. Currently he also has difficulty because his hands are swollen. The house they live in is in bad shape, specially the roofing. The plastic that is meant to prevent the rain from entering is old and torn. They have no money to buy a new plastic, and no energy to collect straw and put it up. The woman is frequently requested to assist the neighbours in their traditional ceremonies. But the man does not pray in the mosque near their home, because they refused to support them when their youngest daughter's daughter died. The mualimo of the mosque alleged that they were not devoted enough.

**Okhalano.** This rich man is in his 40s and has been married three times. He is currently married to two wives and has a total of 14 children. He is Yao of origin, from Lichinga, and is a Muslim. When he was 18 he joined the National Liberation Movement (FRELIMO) and fought for three years. He also fought in the civil war. It was then that he was transferred to Cuamba, and he has never left since. He was discharged in 1996 and started a trading business, transporting beans from Lichinga to sell in Nampula and bringing soap and cloths to sell in Lichinga. With the money earned he invested in agriculture, and also managed to save enough to buy a truck. The household head currently has two plots which produce for subsistence only. The main crops are rice and maize. His first wife takes care of the machambas, and she lives there when it is cropping time. The household head claims: " I produce enough to feed them [all] because my [first] family is serious about production. They are [all] at the fields now, because it is cropping time. Those who follow fashion trends and only go when they feel like it, and want things made easy starve". This family also has goats and pigeons to provide animal proteins for their diet, and they also have diversified income sources. They sell some crops such as beans, diverse products in a shebeen and construction poles the household head brings from Lichinga.

In sum, the political and economic context in which people in Lago, Majune and Cuamba find themselves is characterised by overlapping structures: Between a formal political system and a complex set of traditional authorities; between a larger economic context and local economies with varying potentials and dynamics; and in settings where people find themselves in different positions and with different options for upward social mobility. In the next chapter, we will first take a look at the extended family and household organisation; then take an initial look at peoples' actual social networks and coping strategies; and finally at people's perspectives for the coming five years.



River for Drinking and Washing, Cuamba  
Photo: Sheila Faquir



## 4. SOCIAL RELATIONS OF POVERTY

As accounted for elsewhere (ORGUT 2011a), we see poverty as the outcome of historical and structural forces representing opportunities and constraints to which people have to relate the best they can, as well as the population's own practises of social relations and cultural constructions. The poorest, we have postulated, are more susceptible to structural oppression and have fewer alternative options for their coping strategies than the better-off have. Below we will give a general description of social organisation, social networks and coping strategies pursued by people in the three study-sites on the basis of the preliminary analysis and case studies presented above. In subsequent Reality Checks, the coping strategies of the Focus Households and others in the three communities will be pursued in more detail and with reference to more specific areas of concern – starting with good governance in 2012.

### 4.1 Family and Household Organisation

People in Niassa have traditionally been part of a cultural system where the clan and the matrilineal family played a decisive role in regulating their lives. Succession of political and ritual leadership was largely decided by clan elders, and the matrilineal system largely defined eligible marriage partners, where to settle after marriage, 'ownership' of children, options for separation and divorce etc. With time, the 'cultural system' has come under pressure from encounters with other populations, religion, war and – not least – the 'commodification' of social relationships where access to money has become increasingly important. As will be accounted for below, 'tradition' and 'modernity' are both still very much present in peoples' efforts to carry out their coping strategies.

For households and individuals, the **matrilineal kinship system** still defines the most important people in the life of a person. These are matrilineal kin, with mothers oldest brother (*tio*) being most central and the one with the ultimate responsibility for the well-being of his matrilineal extended family. This involves not only economic support in times of particular needs, but also to assure that his matrilineal family members get an education and can go to a hospital when needed. In fact, people in the three project sites continuously referred to help from their matrilineal 'tio' when asked what they do in situations of particular difficulties and needs. Seen from the point of view of the 'tio' himself, it is very difficult to escape expectations from the family for support. Not contributing may not only jeopardise his position in the family, but also lead to witchcraft (*ufuti*) and other accusations that may have negative implications for his own well-being.

**Table 9.** *Marital Status of Household Head (Percent)*

Marital Status	Lago	Majune	Cuamba	Total
Single	0.8	2.5	1.7	1.7
Married	82.5	29.2	34.2	48.6
Cohabitant	5.8	48.3	40.8	31.7
Separated/divorced	6.7	9.2	10.8	8.9
Widowed	4.2	0.8	12.5	9.2
<b>Polygamous Units</b>				
Polygamous Units	39.6	33.3	5.6	27.0
<b>Female Headed Households</b>				
Female headed Households	10.8	30.0	23.3	21.4

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

**Marriage** is the most common form of household organisation in the three study sites, and encompasses 48.6 percent of the domestic units (see Table 9). Traditionally the husband is expected to move to the homestead of the wife ('uxorilocality'), and their children become the 'property' of her family. Dowry or *lobolo* – which in patrilineal contexts is a way for the husband and his family to 'compensate' the family of the bride for taking her away – does not have any customary basis in Niassa. The Muslim *ndoa* does not have the same implication, and involves only small sums of money. Likewise, separation or divorce has been relatively easy to obtain for women, who could continue to live with their own family while the husband had to leave.

People still present this as the 'ideal', but acknowledge that it is becoming increasingly common that the wife moves to the homestead of the husband and that the children belong to the husband's family. Some men told us that 'moving to the wife's family is embarrassing and 'makes us small'. The large proportion of married units in Lago/Meluluca (separating it from Majune and Cuamba) is probably a combined outcome of social sanctions against 'living together relationships' (that organise only six percent of the households); the prevalence of polygamy (see below); and the ease with which marriage is organised in a traditional Muslim community like Meluluca.

**Cohabitation** or 'living together' means that the 'marriage' is not formally sanctioned by the community and the extended family. While this may imply more 'freedom' for the couple and their children, it may also imply less support from the community and the extended family. In particular women seem to be in a difficult situation if the relationship breaks up, as they often have no rights to their common property and as their families may effectively marginalise them. The high proportion of 'living together' relationships in Majune and Cuamba (see Table 9) is probably the combined outcome of poverty which makes it difficult if not impossible for many young men and women to carry out the customary or formal marriage ceremony and establish a dwelling unit in accordance with tradition, and 'urban modern living' where tradition and the extended family have less influence,

**Polygamy** has roots in the matrilineal system, but seems to have become more common and ingrained in the culture with Islam. According to the Baseline Survey, 27.0 percent of the households in the three study sites consist of more than one spouse – varying from 39.6 percent in 'traditional' Lago to 5.6 percent in 'modern' Cuamba. Having several wives was traditionally seen as a sign of wealth and influence, and made it possible to cultivate more *machambas*. Having several wives still seems to be the goal of most men in the three study sites.<sup>16</sup> According to one older man's words in Nyanja, "*wamuna amitala ali ngati boma*" or "a polygamous man is like head of government". The more limited prevalence of polygamy in Majune and Cuamba seems, again, to be the combined outcome of 'poverty' and 'modernity' respectively.

The proportion of **female headed households** varies significantly between Lago (10.8 percent), Majune (30.0 percent) and Cuamba (23.3 percent). The large majority of female headed household heads are separated or divorced or widows, with a much lower proportion being single mothers (Table 9).<sup>17</sup> As noted above the matrilineal system makes separation and divorce relatively easy. While men will usually be the ones taking the initiative, Islam also gives women the right to formally divorce men if they do not take proper care of their wives and children economically and in cases of violence. The economic situation of the divorcee or widow will depend on whether she has extended family members to rely on or not. Men rarely support the women and children they have left – even though there are cases where traditional authorities and the extended family manage to force them to do so. Particularly

<sup>16</sup> In other areas of Mozambique where we have worked, polygamy was also widespread among the poor but often without the man being in a position to take care of the household units which made them de facto female headed households (see e.g. Tvedten et al. 2009).

<sup>17</sup> We did not record any cases of single households consisting of separated, divorced or widowed men. One reason may be that men die earlier than women ('homens morrem de pressa' as one put it), and another may be that men are more easily taken into their extended family household.

older women who are divorced or widows are easily isolated and in a difficult situation, as their own families often have difficulties feeding a 'non-productive' older member – even though this violates the traditional responsibility of taking care of older family members.

There are, as noted above, very few 'single mothers' in the sense of women having children out of 'wedlock' and never having been married. At the same time, people say that there are many very young girls (often denoted 'children') who get pregnant with men who 'abandon' them. There may therefore be a number of **de facto single mothers** who are not recorded. One reason is that such women (or girls) stay with their own family, and become 'incorporated' into these in the form of a three generational unit. This may be an economic advantage for the single mother as well as for her natal family, who gets more working hands. It also makes it possible to avoid the social stigma of being a single mother, in a context where this is of connected to being a 'prostitute'. With the increasing importance of money, moreover, some women may be formally part of a polygamous household unit but find themselves without economic support from their husbands and are hence also *de facto* single mothers.

As reflected in the Focus Households presented above, people living in 'complete' and formally sanctioned households in the outset have many advantages over people 'living together' or as single household heads: The former fulfil the community's socio-cultural expectations of what a family should be; they have better access to labour and are hence in a better position to diversify their employment and income; and each member is better positioned if the household should end in divorce or widowhood due to their closer links with the extended family. The perhaps best expressions of the link between social organisation and level of poverty and well-being is the prevalence of polygamy among the best-off households and, concomitantly, the fact that female-headed households have a lower income, lower expenditures and fewer assets than male-headed households do (see Table 10). Below, we will look more explicitly at the coping strategies of the poor and better-off households as we understand them now at the initial phase of the Reality Checks process.



Tailor, Lago.  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

## 4.2 Social Networks and Coping Strategies

As elaborated above, people in Lago, Majune and Cuamba find themselves in a political and economic context and a socio-cultural system of household organisation that represent possibilities and constraints in their daily lives and for their options for upward social mobility (see also ORGUT 2011a). The constraints are not only represented in the form of political and material conditions and poverty *per se*, but also in terms of what we may call peoples' 'world view': Their coping strategies depend on the knowledge they have about different alternative options and their ideas about what they can accomplish – including access to and use of traditional and public institutions. On the basis of our fieldwork experience so far, we will take an initial look at the coping strategies of the poorest and the better-off as well as relate to gender disparities.

## The Poor

During our initial contacts with the poor Focus Households and others in the same situation, we asked what their plans were for the future. With only a couple of exceptions, the very poorest households consistently responded “[W]e have no plans” – in some cases followed by statements implying ‘[I]t is no use’. The rather fatalist perceptions of the options for improving their lives is the outcome of two processes: On the one hand, such households have to focus all their efforts and attention on the daily struggle of getting enough to eat and earn money for necessary expenses, and simply have no time and strength to think about and invest in a better future – reminiscent of what some have called a ‘culture of poverty’. On the other hand, many of the poor simply do not know how to improve their situation. In line with this, agriculture and fishing are seen as the main potential source of income even though people know well that the pay is minimal and the options for accumulating enough money to invest in for example improved agricultural technologies and a boat or canoe and net are nearly non-existent.

For many of the poor, the main coping strategy is to establish or maintain relations with others who they believe are in a position to support them both in their daily lives and in times of particular needs. These are first and foremost extended family members, who are seen to have a moral responsibility to help their poorer relatives. Most of the poor households claimed that there is little help to get from the immediate family (siblings or children) – often with the argument that they are as poor as the household in question itself. However, the same households usually named a more distant relative (primarily maternal uncles or nephews) from whom they had either received help or expected help if their situation should become precarious. The type of support varied, and included direct assistance in the form of food and basic commodities, money to go to the hospital or pay for medicines, and longer-term help in the form of agricultural tools or fishing net. The poor Focus Households also often state that neighbours and friends may help with small sums of money, left-overs from food etc., but in small quantities and often only in the form of ‘moral support’.

*“Mphawi safuncha  
angofunchidwa.”*

*“Poor people do not ask  
questions. We are asked”*

Poor man in Lago

However, the same households usually named a more distant relative (primarily maternal uncles or nephews) from whom they had either received help or expected help if their situation should become precarious. The type of support varied, and included direct assistance in the form of food and basic commodities, money to go to the hospital or pay for medicines, and longer-term help in the form of agricultural tools or fishing net. The poor Focus Households also often state that neighbours and friends may help with small sums of money, left-overs from food etc., but in small quantities and often only in the form of ‘moral support’.

In all three study sites there are also community-based systems of social support to the very poorest and most needy. A distinction seems to be drawn between the ‘genuinely poor’ or *Usuwedwa* and the ‘lazy poor’ or *Chilecua* to use the Nyanja terminology – with the latter largely being seen to be responsible for their own situation. The main sources of support are traditional authorities and the Mosque – or churches in Cuamba. The Focus Households made several references to the fact that the *régulos* and *rainhas* have ordered people to give support in kind to people who are in precarious situations and come to beg (*pedir*). One male household head told us that he went to the beach to beg when the fishing boats came in and he had nothing for his children – bending down and holding out his hands to demonstrate. The other source of support to the very poorest is food and (albeit much more rare) cash that is collected in the Mosque during Friday prayers. This seems to be more directed towards elders and the handicapped, but according to the *chehe* of one of the main Mosques in Lago they do not always manage to collect ‘as the Koran prescribes’ as there are so few ‘rich people’.

We have met very few poor households who count on the State to improve their situation. Only seven of the 360 households in the Baseline Survey received support in cash or kind from INSS or Acção Social, and all lived in Majune or Cuamba. According to a community leader, most people do not look upon the State as having any *obligations* to support the poor as households and individuals – despite the fact that most households pay tax. At the same time social protection measures (cash transfers, work schemes etc.) and the ‘7 million scheme’ were usually talked about as if being for the better-off or for people with the right connections (sometimes with a direct reference to ‘the Party’). Neither did we hear any



explicit expectations in terms NGOs or other civil society organisations – probably because their experience with such institutions is so limited. Only a total of four households receive direct support in cash or kind from NGOs, all in Majune. People do, as we shall see, look to the State for improvements in education, health, water, electricity etc., but this seems to be linked to community rather than their own private well-being.

A central initial impression from the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check is how the existing structural constraints seem to perpetuate poverty in poor families over generations. The stories told tend to emphasise how people come from poor families, and how their children are not in positions to help because they are also poor. But there are exceptions of people who seem to make it despite all the odds against them. We will look further into such cases in later Reality Checks when we get to know the households better, but one example stand out: In one of the poorest ‘Usuwedwa’ families in Lago, a boy of 19 years had managed to get through 7<sup>th</sup> Grade in Meluluca. His father had been putting aside small sums of money and the boy himself had worked on a fishing boat as ‘marinheiro’ during weekends. Together they have accumulated enough for the boy to start 8<sup>th</sup> Grade in Metangula, where he rented a small room to live in during the week when he was at school. His dream is to get ‘any employment’, so that ‘I can help my family’.

### ***The Better-Off***

The better-off households in Lago, Majune and Cuamba are generally characterised by having more alternative options both economically and socially than the poor. Households of this type tend to be involved in several alternative sources of income, they have often lived in Malawi or travelled widely in Niassa, and they have plans for the future – both for themselves or their children. An additional characteristic of the better-off households is that they can fill social relationships with the extended family and others with material content. Outstanding claims connect people, and represent an important form of social security should there be sudden needs. There seems to be a better basis for accumulation in Lago (due to the fisheries) and in Cuamba (due to commercial activities) than in Majune that has little beyond agriculture.

*“Umpahawi siulingana”*

(Poverty is never equal)

*Nyanja Proverb*

At the same time, few families seem to have a long history of being ‘rich’. In Lago, for example, prior to 2008 and the establishment of the road there were simply very few possibilities of accumulating wealth in a context where it was difficult to take produce to markets and find buyers. The ‘odjifunila’ and ‘opata’ households we met may have had a good start in terms of ownership of land, canoes for fishing etc., but their conditions have improved rapidly after 2008 as they were able to exploit the improved marketing options. Another common denominator seems to be that many of the better-off have received external economic support at some stage – either from relatives or from the ‘7 million scheme’ that has helped them progress. In their own words, they have ‘worked harder’ than their poorer counterparts – as indicated by the statement of a successful *comerciante* who said “you have to work to earn [money]” (“*Tem que trabalhar para ganhar*”).

Having said this, there is also a strong social pressure on the better-off which may inhibit accumulation of property and assets. As already mentioned, the better-off are expected to support poorer relatives and neighbours in times of difficulties. This is not only a ‘moral’ responsibility, but is also seen as important to have access to people they need for example in fishing boats or in the agricultural fields during planting, harvesting and other labour-demanding parts of the agricultural season (*ganho-ganho*). In addition, there are sanctions in the form of witchcraft (*ufiti*) working against people who are seen to have become rich at the expense of others, or who are seen to be detrimental for the ‘socio-cultural order’ in the community – even though we still do not have much information about this.

While there is a clear development towards a class of 'better-off' and increasing inequalities, even the best-off may be vulnerable to changes in their situation. Permanent employment is, as we have seen, rare in all three communities under study. And agriculture as well as fishing may see dramatic fluctuations in terms of productivity from season to season. People are aware of and recognise changes in climate and natural conditions. Also for the better-off, we were struck by the limited variations in terms of sources of employment and income: Practically all are involved in agriculture, fishing or trade, and we met very few people with future plans that involved employment or other more 'secure' sources of income – with the exception of the very best off among the Focus Households.

### 4.3 Gender Relations

Walking around in Lago, Majune and Cuamba, there are scenes of men and women living in apparently 'separate worlds' by working and meeting informally in groups of other men and women only. Domestic chores such as washing and fetching water are the domain of women; agriculture is divided into male- and female tasks, and fishing activities are the domain of men. In an apparent defiance of gender divisions, small-scale commercial activities is done by both men and women on what seem like equal terms which is not very common in northern Mozambique. Moreover, the Baseline Survey indicates that there is a fairly large extent of 'shared economic responsibilities' within households.

We have already shown how the socio-cultural context of the three study sites, with its matrilineal kinship system and Islam as a religion, defines a set of parameters for the relations between men and women. In very general terms, matrilineality does not give women power and influence per se but it *does* define their own family as more important than that of their husband – which has implications for their options to make choices. Islam on its part gives men the responsibility to feed and care for their families, and also defines a set of obligations for women in their relation to men – including the responsibility to be obedient. These values are instilled in children throughout their upbringing, including their participation in the Islamic school (*madrassa*) and more special occasions such as initiation rites. Tradition and Islam are less prevalent in Cuamba, which we have seen reflected in e.g. household organisation.

Households headed by women – which is foreign both to matrilineality and Islam as 'ideologies' – seem to be in a particularly difficult situation. Preliminary impressions after the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check show that for women to head a household comes with a number of costs. One is the stigma of not having a husband, which tends to define women as 'lose' or 'unmarriageable'. A second is the implications of not having a man who can help out with key 'male' tasks particularly in agriculture. And a third is the constraints set on the freedom of movement by having the sole responsibility for taking care of children. In line with this the majority of such women have been forced into such a position as the father of their children does not take on any responsibility, through separation or divorce or by becoming a widow.<sup>18</sup> According to our Baseline Study, female headed households



Women on the Way to the Machamba, Lago  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>18</sup> This is, as we have shown in studies from other parts of Mozambique, not necessarily so: In urban areas, there seems to be a tendency for women to prefer to stay alone and care for their children particularly in cases where the man does not contribute to the household and is seen as a 'burden' (see Paulo et.al. 2007 and 2010).

are generally poorer than male-headed households in terms of income and expenditure as well as assets (Table 10).

Still based on first impressions, the position of women within male-headed households varies considerably. Visiting compounds, we were often met by both men and women. While the latter tended to sit a little in the back, they usually participated actively in discussions and voiced their meanings. The Baseline Survey also indicates that there is a degree of shared responsibilities, and that women own dwellings and *machambas* as often as men do. On the other hand, men as well as women emphasised that it is the men who are to control the money in the family – indicating limited economic independence among women in male-headed households. We heard concrete implications of this at the Health Post and at schools, where we were told that many children did not come to school and women and children did not go to the Health Post because the male head of their families refused to give them money.

*“Sindilomula pakuti ndili wankazi”*

(We have no influence as woman)

*Poor Nyanja woman complaining*

It is too early to have qualified opinions about the wider network of men and women outside the domestic domain. However, women in Lago, Majune and Cuamba seem primarily to interact with friends and neighbours in their daily activities, while men tend to meet in more special arenas such as around shops and bars and in the Mosque. The Baseline Study also indicates that relations with formal and informal institutions is in the hands of the male head of household, and that poor single women are less likely to contact such institutions than poor men.

**Table 10.** Key Socio-Economic Indicators by Male- and Female Headed Households in Lago, Majune and Cuamba (Income, Expenditure and Assets)

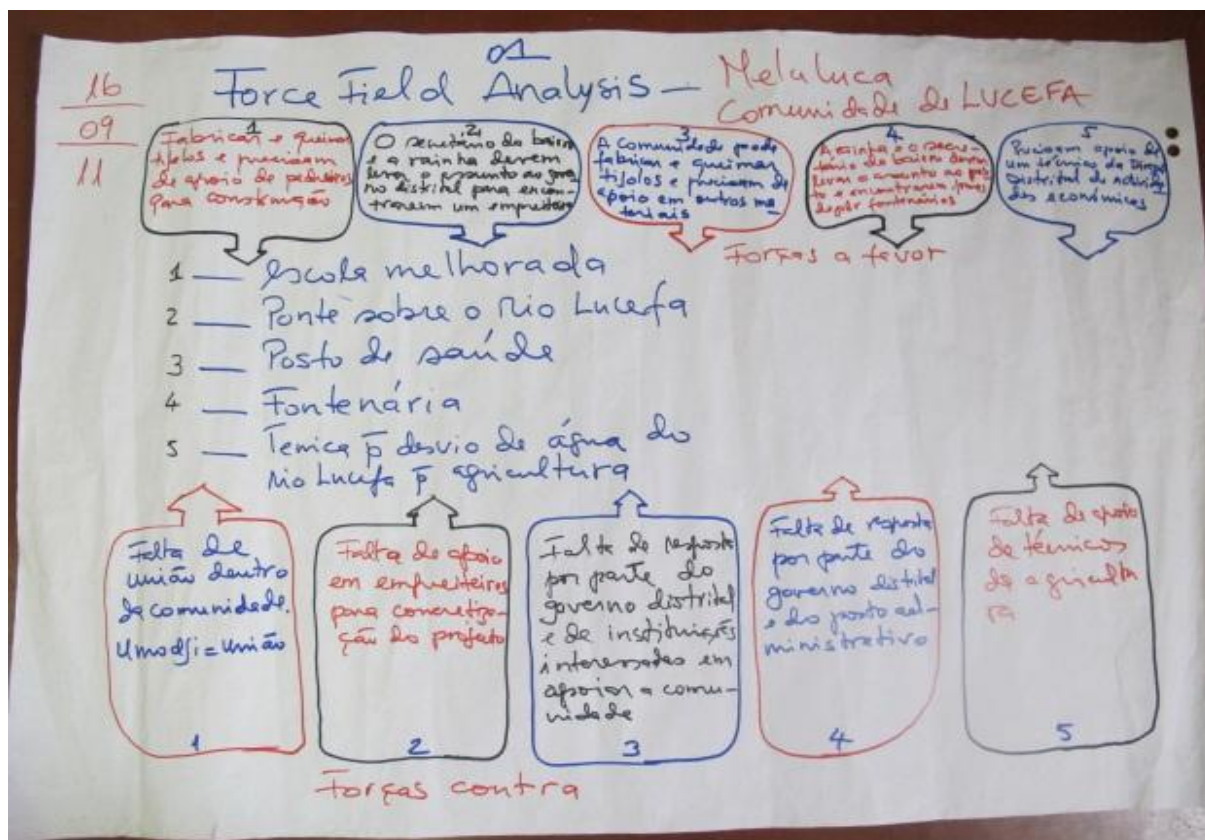
Indicator	Male-Headed HH	Female-Headed HH
HHs selling agricultural products	49.4	39.7
HHs spending less than 250 MTn per week	33.6	61.0
HHs spending more than 1000 MTn per week	20.1	5.2
HHs with radio	66.4	16.9
HHs with telephone	38.5	9.1
HHs with bicycle	55.5	24.7
HHs without 'esteira'	10.2	14.3

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

## 4.4 Future Prospects

To end this 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check from Lago, Majune and Cuamba, we will present two sets of data that throw light on the perceived future challenges and prospects of the communities and their population. They are derived from the **Force Field Exercise** and the **Baseline Survey**. The Force Field Analysis example is taken from Lago, and we refer to the other Sub-Reports for comparative examples.

As seen from the illustration below, the five most important issues to be solved in the Lago communities are seen to be 1) improved educational facilities; 2) improved systems of transportation (including bridges); 3) improved health facilities; 4) improved access to clean water; and 5) improved agricultural technologies (including systems of irrigation). The community has also listed forces for and forces against achieving these goals (see Table 11).



Force-Field Analysis, Lago  
Photo: Inge Tvedten

**Table 11: Forces for and against preferred development options**

FORCES IN FAVOUR
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The community can make and burn [building] blocks, but need the support of a mason for construction of the school.</li> <li>2. The Bairro Secretary and the Queen should inform District Government about the [main] concern of the population, which is to have a bridge over River Lussefa, for them to find a constructor who can make a bridge with quality.</li> <li>3. The community can make and burn [building] blocks, but need other types of material in order to construct a Health Post.</li> <li>4. The Queen and the Bairro Secretary should approach the Administrative Post to find ways to increase the number of wells in the community.</li> <li>5. We need the support of a technician from the District Directorate of Economic and Social Services to teach us how to construct [systems of] irrigation.</li> </ol>
FORCES CONTRA
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a lack of unification (<i>umodji</i> in Nyanja) in the community.</li> <li>2. There is a lack of support from building companies to implement the project.</li> <li>3. There is a lack of responses from the District Government and other institutions that can support the community.</li> <li>4. There is a lack of the necessary responses from the District Government and the Administrative Post Fail to construct the wells.</li> <li>5. There is a lack of support from agricultural technicians.</li> </ol>

Source: RC Mozambique Force-Field Exercise 2011



For individual households, the main areas of *expected* change in their situation the next five years (i.e. until 2015 and the termination of the Reality Check series) are listed in Table 12. As seen, people are most interested in improvements in habitation or their dwelling, in their own production and income and in employment. We will follow the extent to which the communities of Lago, Majune and Cuamba and the families living there manage to fulfil their dreams and expectations in follow-up Reality Checks the coming four years (2012 to 2015).

**Table 12.** *Main Area of Expected Change among Households the Coming Five Years (Percent)*

Area of Change	Lago	Majune	Cuamba	Total
Employment	25.8	17.5	5.8	16.4
Education	5.0	11.7	17.5	11.4
Health	5.0	4.2	3.3	4.2
Own production	13.3	25.8	15.8	18.3
Habitation	20.8	26.7	11.7	19.7
Assets	15.0	8.3	15.8	13.1
Other	9.2	3.3	28.3	12.5
None	5.8	3.3	28.3	12.5

Source: RC Mozambique Baseline Survey 2011

## 5. SUMMING UP

This 1st Reality Check in Mozambique has painted a fairly broad picture of the structural constraints and socio-cultural conditions in Lago, Majune and Cuamba – and is as noted in the Introduction to this report primarily meant to represent a ‘baseline’ upon which subsequent Reality Checks are to be grounded. However, the preliminary information we have does indicate some key issues regarding the dynamics of poverty and well-being and the relevance of formal and informal institutions for social mobility.

### 5.1 Niassa

- The Niassa Province is characterised by having a volatile history, and was for years the most isolated and poor province in Mozambique. However, there have been recent signs of improvements first and foremost through significant reductions in the consumption based poverty rate. Social indicators on education, health (with the important exception of HIV-AIDS) etc. are still below national averages.
- The overall socio-economic indicators for Niassa find resonance in our data from Lago, Majune and Cuamba, and we have shown signs of enhanced economic activities and reduced poverty. However, it is equally clear that poverty and well-being is unequally distributed – not only between the three areas under study but also within them.
- The salient feature of a dynamic pro-poor situation seems to be the combination of a diversified local economy on the one hand, and access to markets in neighbouring countries, neighbouring provinces and/or urban areas on the other. In line with this, Lago and Cuamba score highest and Majune scores lowest on most economic and poverty-related indicators.
- The economic situation in Niassa may change significantly in the coming years, with the on-going commercial forestation, prospects for coal and mineral mining and (albeit with less potential impact) tourism. Care must be taken to secure that these economic developments will be environmentally friendly, create sufficient employment and be pro-poor.

### 5.2 The Communities

- Lago, Majune and Cuamba as communities share formal political/administrative context by being part of the five-tier structure of Provincial and District Government, Administrative Posts, Localities and Villages. Cuamba is also part of an overlapping Municipal structure, with a complex division of responsibility.
- At the same time, traditional structures in the form of traditional authorities, a matrilineal kinship system and religious institutions are still very much intact, and have a strong influence on the organisation of the community as well as on individual families and households. However, there are also important differences between the communities:
- Lago/Meluluca has traditionally been a relatively isolated community depending on subsistence agriculture and fishing. The community is currently in a process of considerable change, primarily as a result of the improved road built from the district capital Metangula in 2008. This has not only set in motion enhanced economic activities, but also processes of increasing inequalities between the poor and the better-off.
- Majune is located in the interior of the Province; has traditionally depended on agriculture, subsistence fishing and hunting; and became ‘connected to the outside world’

through the improvement of the National Road in 2006. However, this has not instigated much change as Majune lacked the basis for a diversified economy and still primarily depends on subsistence agriculture with weak purchasing powers and few commercial outlets.

- Cuamba is the urban hub of the province and is well connected in terms of roads and railways, but the poorer parts of the urban and semi-urban population still primarily depend on agriculture. Informal economic activities are fiercely competitive and yield limited returns. A relatively large proportion of the households have access to formal employment, reducing vulnerability to sudden changes.
- The main perceived problems in the three project sites are related to lack of or poor-quality water (Lago, Majune, Cuamba); poor primary school facilities (Lago, Cuamba); poor health facilities (Lago, Cuamba); lack of electricity (Lago, Majune), poor roads (Lago, Cuamba), conflicts between people and animals (Majune); lack of employment opportunities (Majune, Cuamba), lack of market outlets for agricultural products (Majune) and crime (Cuamba).

### 5.3 People, Institutions and Power Relations

- People in Lago, Majune and Cuamba find themselves in the interface between informal and formal political structures. While the former are central for their daily lives and inter-relations, they look to the State institutions for solving their problems in education, health, energy, transport, infrastructure etc.
- There are considerable differences in the extent to which informal and formal institutions are consulted by the populations in Lago, Majune and Cuamba – indicating differences not only in accessibility and quality ('good governance') but also in the degree of trust in these institutions.
- The State has related to the importance of traditional authorities by incorporating them into their areas of responsibility through 'overlapping institutions', resulting in a degree of mutual dependence and implying risks of loss of legitimacy.
- For the poor, access to public institutions is inhibited by poverty, lack of education and (in many cases) social marginalisation. They tend to relate to traditional institutions and their extended family to establish vital social relationships and receive support at times of crisis.
- The better-off have easier access to public institutions both in the communities and by being more mobile and having better options for relating to the institutions located in the District or Provincial capital.
- The poor health situation and inadequate health facilities in two of the three study sites (Majune being the exception) have strong negative implications for well-being, while the perceptions of education as a way out of poverty is negatively affected by the difficulties of getting employment.
- Agriculture is the key economic sector in all three communities, including (semi-)urban Cuamba. There is generally a low level of technology and limited use of fertilisers, but productivity varies between rainfed and inundated *machambas* which are subject to land conflicts.
- While people look to 'the market' for outlets for their economic activities, the State is considered important through the '7 million MTn' scheme. This is widely seen as central for development, but also as unjustly channelled to the better-off households in the communities. The Districts on their part argue that the money is best spent on projects with potential for employment creation.

## 5.4 Social Mobility

- The population in Lago, Majune and Cuamba distinguishes between 2-4 levels of poverty and 1-3 levels of well-being in their respective vernacular. Each category is defined with reference to the combination of material poverty and social relationships – with the latter being seen as key for the options for social mobility.
- Some families have been poor for generations, and have never managed to establish the necessary social relationships and acquire the necessary resources for upward social mobility. These households depend on external support to survive, either from their extended family, from local systems of redistribution and support, or from public systems of social protection. While most poor families are seen as ‘victims’ of their own conditions (or ‘structural oppression’ in our vocabulary), people also define some households as ‘lazy’ and hence less eligible for pity and support.
- Most families are seen as ‘transitional’ poor. They may work hard and produce and earn sufficiently to fulfil their basic needs, but are still vulnerable and may see their fortunes change rapidly as a result of sudden shocks such as loss of income earners or illness. Their challenge is to re-establish themselves as viable social units by mobilising external social relationships and alternative sources of income. This is difficult in the current socio-economic context, particularly for female-headed households and in a ‘depressed’ area like Majune with few alternative options.
- The better-off households are generally identified as those who have economic means, ‘do not depend on anybody’ and are in a position to give work to others. Some are part of ‘fortunate’ families with members who have employment and access to land, fishing boats etc. (denoted the ‘truly rich in Cuamba’). Others have managed to exploit new economic opportunities, either because they already possessed some resources that could be expanded with new marketing options – such as productive *machambas* or canoes – or because they had relationships that could be mobilised to access credit including the ‘7 million Mt scheme’.
- The upcoming Reality Checks will follow a selected number of Focus and Panel Households through qualitative and quantitative data respectively, in order to ascertain the processes of upward and downward social mobility and the main forces behind social change.

## 5.5 Some Possible Implications for Swedish Development Cooperation

Sweden has concentrated much of its development cooperation in the province of Niassa, focussing on a wide spectre of activities including general budget support and support to the public sector (good governance, electricity, roads), the private sector (Malonda Foundation) and civil society (SCC/PASC). Economic developments and poverty reduction have been positive in the province, and – albeit acknowledging the problem of attribution – there is little doubt that Sweden has been a central contributor. Such a concentration of efforts also eases the task of result based aid management. Although relations between Niassa and Sweden have been somewhat strained in 2011 (with a temporary halt in budget support allocations), there are good reasons to continue the cooperation.

**Poverty and Well-being.** With reference to the three Districts being the focus of this project, the situation as regards poverty and well-being is characterized by a relatively small group of ultra-poor, a majority of ‘transitional’ poor and a relatively small group of better-off.



- Policies and interventions should focus on social protection measures for the very poorest. Current public interventions reach a very small proportion of the eligible population, at the same time as there are a number of locally based systems for social protection. Increased emphasis should be given to link the two.
- Policies and intervention for economic development should focus on businesses and individuals in a position to create employment. In addition to investments in infrastructure (see below), this should be accomplished by improved access to credit and a more focused implementation of the 7 million MTn scheme.
- The most serious issue of inequality is that of gender. Increased support should be given to interventions by civil society to inform women about their rights and key legal instruments; gender-sensitive interventions for women empowerment involving key socio-cultural institutions such as traditional authorities and religious organisations, and women-targeted credit schemes for small-scale enterprises (incl. the 7 million MTn scheme).

**Good Governance.** Mozambique and Niassa have a complex five-tier system of governance, where current government policy is to decentralise and strengthen the District level.

- The District level has a pivotal role in development and poverty reduction, being in the best position to relate to local populations. Important work has been done in the areas of human resource development and financial management, but the District Administrations have limited financial room for responding to the needs of the local population.
- In addition, emphasis should be given to enhanced transparency and accountability in the form of more pro-active and open forms of dissemination of information. Currently the position of local government is negatively influenced by (mis)conceptions about their role and responsibilities in the communities.
- The on-going efforts of civil society to build the capacity of citizens to monitor the performance of Local Government (and make them accountable) should be continued and extended.

**Agriculture and Employment Creation.** For the large majority of the population in the three Districts under study, agriculture remains the back-bone of their coping strategies.

- The subsistence sector is characterized by rudimentary agricultural methods and limited diversification of crops. Increased emphasis should be given to improved technologies, primarily through enhanced access to extension-services.
- The commercial agricultural sector (including forestry) is characterized by unpredictability and varying returns to labour. Private sector initiatives should emphasize the importance of secure and predictable incomes for poor farmers.
- Diversification of employment and income opportunities is key to development and poverty reduction. Young people – often educated and unemployed – are in a particularly vulnerable position. Traditional sources of employment in the informal economy are often saturated, and efforts should be made to identify and support new and alternative sources for the young.

**Physical Infrastructure.** Niassa is still relatively isolated from the rest of Mozambique, and there are still communities in the province that are marginalised.

- Roads are central for development, both for economic activities and trade and for access to key social services such as health and education. However, the development effect will depend on the presence of economic activities that can be expanded and commercialised – including both agricultural and non-agricultural ones.
- Electricity is central for development, and considerable investments in grids have been made in Niassa – even though two of the three study sites are still not connected. While

key for the development of economic enterprises and social institutions, electricity is costly and has a relatively low priority among poor households. Alternative energy sources should be considered.

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