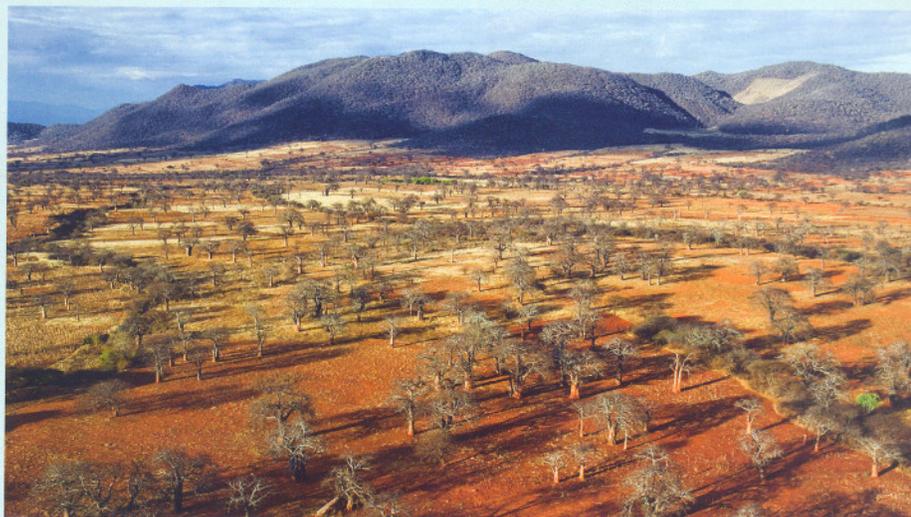


# CORRIDORS of potential

Wildlife corridors connect one protected area to another and are integral to many trans-boundary conservation initiatives, including the KAZA TFCA. One of the most ambitious projects, however, is happening on the other side of Africa, where villagers and conservationists are working to link two of Africa's largest wildlife reserves. **Rudolf Hahn** and **Rolf D. Baldus** report.



MICHAEL POLIZA

The Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania is one of Africa's largest protected areas. When linked to Mozambique's Niassa National Reserve, it will provide a combined elephant range of some 120 000 square kilometres – the size of Malawi.

The days when elephant herds could roam great distances uninhibited by boundaries and fences are not yet over. In southern Tanzania, local communities are shaping part of their land into a wildlife corridor to link two of the largest protected areas in Africa – the Selous Game Reserve and the Niassa National Reserve in neighbouring Mozambique. Both reserves, when connected by the corridor and including other adjacent conservation areas, will constitute a continuous elephant range of 120 000 square kilometres. That's the size of Malawi. This will be big enough not only for the estimated population of 85 000 elephants, but also for the large herds of buffalo and more than half of the continent's remaining African wild dogs.

The corridor secures gene flows and conserves biodiversity by connecting miombo woodlands with a wide variety of wildlife habitats. Open savannas, wetlands and riverine forests, interrupted by steep escarpments, granite inselbergs and mountains, form a unique scenic landscape.

The corridor is sparsely settled by the Undendeule, Ngoni and Yao people. The Yao are originally from Mozambique and have maintained strong cross-border ties with their relatives in Niassa. It was they who, in 2001, decided to set aside part of their land to create Wildlife Management Areas, a development that will assure the future connectivity of the corridor. Heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture

and natural resources, the local communities decided to use the attractions of their area for the development of eco-tourism as an additional future source of income. A mix of income generation from improved natural resources management, such as honey production, together with the creation of a new tourism destination, will boost the local economy.

Scientific surveys show that the wildlife population is recovering significantly, a direct result of village game-scout patrols. First set up in 2006, the patrols have since been boosted by rangers from Selous and Niassa, as well as the Tanzanian National Anti-poaching Unit and rangers of the district authorities. Joint patrols are being carried out, in particular, along the Ruvuma River, which forms 180 kilometres of the Tanzanian–Mozambican border. Cooperation, the exchange of research results and the joint planning of conservation management activities along the river are part of the cross-border initiative.

International organisations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the German government (through the KfW Development Bank and Capacity Building International or InWEnt), together with the Swiss-based NGO ADAP, are providing various kinds of support. District authorities and villagers

are offered capacity building and training programmes in conservation and natural resources management, as well as advice on investments into the necessary local infrastructure.

Based on the strong commitment of the local communities and with the finalisation of land-use plans and surveys, it is expected that no less than five Wildlife Management Areas will secure the integrity of the corridor within the next two years.

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