

The Expansion of Tree Monocultures

Impacts on local peasants communities in the Province of Niassa

Winfridus Overbeek



MOZAMBIQUE

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**The Expansion of Tree Monocultures in Mozambique.
Impacts on Local Peasant Communities in the
Province of Niassa**
A field report

Winfriidus Overbeek

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I. Introduction

This publication is the result of a visit to Mozambique in November 2009 by two activists¹ involved in the struggle against tree monocultures in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. This visit was made possible by the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) with the goal of exchanging experiences about large-scale tree monocultures.

With more than 40 years of dealing with monoculture plantations and expansion, Brazil has a lot of experience in this area. At the same time, affected communities and supporting organizations in the country have led several struggles and acts of resistance and formed alliances, which nearly ten years ago resulted in the foundation of the *Alert against the Green Desert Network (Rede Alerta contra o Deserto Verde)*.

In the past few years, WRM has been made aware of the fact that more and more tree monocultures are being planted in Mozambique. Since Brazil and Mozambique have in common Portuguese as their official language, the idea arose to promote the exchange between the two countries so as to:

- exchange experiences with the affected communities about the impacts;
- better understand the current situation of the introduction and expansion of tree monocultures in Mozambique; and,
- identify organizations involved or interested in the subject.

This visit would not have been possible without the invaluable help of our friends at UNAC (União Nacional de Camponeses - National Peasant Union) in Mozambique, and UCA (União dos Camponeses e Associações de Lichinga - Union of Peasant and Associations of Lichinga), who volunteered to receive and accompany the Brazilian delegation and organized the visits to the communities. We also want to thank Via Campesina Brasil for their support in this initiative.

¹ Domingos Firmiano dos Santos, AfroBrazilian (quilombola) community leader of Angelim and national leader of CONAQ (Coordenação Nacional das Comunidades Quilombolas - National Coordination of AfroBrazilian Communities), and Winnie Overbeek, member of the Alert against the Green Desert Network.

II. Chapter 1. Tree Monocultures in Mozambique

1.1 *Short Description*

The introduction and expansion of large-scale tree monocultures in Mozambique is a recent development. In terms of export monocultures, cotton and tobacco have been the country's traditional and major export products for many years. More recently, sesame has been added to the list. Because the latter is a food crop, it is more accepted by peasants than tobacco and cotton. Lately, the government has also been promoting the cultivation of *jatropha* (known as *getrofa* in Mozambique and *pinhão-mansô* in Brazil) for the production of biodiesel.

It was not possible to collect detailed information about the total area of land used for tree plantations in Mozambique, but it is estimated that this area is still relatively small, about 25,000 hectares. But it is forecast that hundreds of thousands of hectares will be planted.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of tree plantations in Mozambique:

- the first type comprises relatively small areas of eucalyptus and pine² planted in the 1970s and 1980s;
- the second type are the large-scale tree monocultures, especially of eucalyptus, pine and teak trees, which are presently being promoted in several of the country's ten provinces.

The Mozambican government's plan to promote large-scale monocultures of exotic, fast-growing tree species (eucalyptus, pine and teak) is part of a strategy to attract private investments to the provinces, with the goal of generating jobs and encouraging regional development. This strategy gained momentum when the national economy transformed into a market economy due to the involvement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, a process initiated by the Mozambican government in the second half of the 1980s.

Through foreign private investments, tree monocultures in different stages of implementation are being introduced in several provinces.

- Active in the province of **Manica** is *Indústria Florestal de Manica*, a subsidiary of the South-African company *Komatiland Forests*.
- In the province of Nampula —after signing an agreement with the government— the Norwegian company Green Resources is planning to plant 100,000 hectares of trees in Mozambique.³ At the end of December 2009, the Mozambican government announced the approval of this project. The company can now invest US\$ 2.2 billion in 126,000 hectares of eucalyptus plantations for the production of paper, sawn wood and charcoal, together with

²Called *pinus* in Brazilian Portuguese and *pinho* in Mozambican Portuguese.

³Capitaleritreia, 'Phaunos Timber Fund Raises Stake in East African Forester Green Resources', 1 October 2009, <http://www.capitaleritreia.com/region/phaunos-timber-fund-raises-stake-in-east-african-forester-green-resources/>

investments in a sawmill and in infrastructure. This project is expected to create 11,500 jobs and the company has promised to build schools, health centres and other infrastructure for the local people.⁴

- In the province of **Zambézia**, *Tectona Forests of Zambezia* is planning to plant 35,000 hectares of teak, and *Ntacia Florestas de Zambezia* is planning 35,000 hectares of eucalyptus and pine.⁵
- Also the provinces of **Zambézia** and **Manica** will provide two-thirds of the 200,000 hectares of eucalyptus plantations that the Portuguese company *Portucel* wants to plant for the production of cellulose.⁶ More recent information confirms that the negotiations between Portucel and the Mozambican government are about to be finalized, although no decision has been taken about the location of the pulp plant.⁷ A third news bulletin confirms that the government has granted a concession of 173,000 hectares to the company.⁸
- According to information received from UNAC, tree monocultures are especially promoted in **Niassa** province. Accordingly, UNAC proposed that the Brazilian delegation limit their field visit to this province, where UNAC and UCA would accompany them.

1.2 The Expansion of Pine and Eucalyptus Monocultures in Niassa Province

Niassa is the largest province in Mozambique, with a total area of 129,000 km², but with a relatively small number of inhabitants, about 1 million people. The province is in the extreme north of the country, far from the capital, Maputo. It has fertile land⁹, but no major investments.

Presumably these facts played a part in the Mozambican government's decision to orient some of the companies and investors interested in pine and eucalyptus plantations to invest in this province.

Just like the rest of the country, 70 to 80% of the population of Niassa lives in rural areas. The local people are still rebuilding their lives after the civil war that lasted almost 15 years and ended in 1992, when Frelimo and Renamo signed a peace agreement. During this conflict practically

⁴Agência de informação de Moçambique, 'Mozambique: government approves eucalyptus plantations', <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912221059.html>, 22 December 2009.

⁵Vasterasstift, 'Global Solidarity Forest Fund', www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

⁶Monjane, Boaventura, 'Portucel negocia compra de 200 mil hectares em Moçambique para plantar eucalipto', report of Via Campesina, 11 November 2009.

⁷<http://www.scribd.com/doc/23421860/Southern-Online-233>, 'Portucel to plant 200,000 ha in Mozambique for new pulp plant', 1 December 2009.

⁸Agência de informação de Moçambique, 'Mozambique: government approves eucalyptus plantations', <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912221059.html>, 22 December 2009.

⁹The region around the capital of Niassa, Lichinga, is known as the Lichinga Plateau, which, at an altitude of about 1,300 m, has many small villages and communities that depend on agriculture on these fertile lands.

the whole rural population of Niassa took refuge in the neighboring country of Malawi.

Local people said that the introduction of large-scale tree plantations in the province was the idea of an Anglican priest living in Niassa. He went abroad to look for support, which explains the involvement of the Churches of Sweden and Norway as investors in the plantations (see below).

The planting of tree monocultures by the above-mentioned companies started in 2005, although the largest area has been planted from 2007 on.

• ***Malonda Foundation***

One of the major parties involved in the province is the Malonda Foundation. This is a government agency, created in 2005, with the aim of promoting and facilitating the development of the private sector in the province in the areas of plantations, agriculture, wildlife/tourism and credit for agriculture. The foundation itself manages 800 hectares of pine and eucalyptus, planted in the community of Mussa in Lichinga district, which according to the Foundation is 'experimental' in character. It also owns a forestry nursery that will have produced 500,000 eucalyptus and pine seedlings in 2009 so as to expand its area by a further 200 hectares in 2010.

Furthermore, it tries to facilitate the establishment of forestry companies and has '*helped establish[ing] four forestry companies with industrial objectives*'. The following companies are presently 'partners' of the Foundation:

- ***New Forests Malonda***, working in Muembe district;
- ***Malonda Tree Farms***, working in Sanga district;
- ***Florestas de Niassa***, working in Lichinga district.

A brochure confirms that '*more than 15,000 hectares have been planted in four years*'. In another brochure the foundation claims that '*in the past three years about 8,000 hectares were planted by three recently established companies*'. According to the website, the foundation also intends to implement '*carbon credit programs and/or projects*'¹⁰.

Another company that, according to the Malonda Foundation, is working independently in the province is ***Chikweti Forests of Niassa***, whose goal it is to occupy 140,000 hectares of land in various districts in Niassa province, 68,500 hectares of which will be used for tree monocultures. There is also a company called ***Florestal de Messangulo***, which intends to occupy 34,000 hectares, of which 17,000 hectares will be used for tree plantations.¹¹

¹⁰ www.malonda.co.mz/por/areas_de_intervencao/forestry

¹¹ Vasterasstift, 'Global Solidarity Forest Fund', www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

• ***The Potential Area of Tree Plantations in Niassa Province***

It is not an easy task to determine the exact number of hectares of pine and eucalyptus the various companies intend to plant in the province. But it is at least several hundred thousand hectares, quite a significant area.

A report about this topic is available on the Malonda Foundation's website; it is by *Indufor* and *Savcom*, two Finnish consulting companies specialized in tree plantations, in collaboration with the company *Rural Consult Ltda*. Figure 2 shows Niassa province with the areas already occupied by plantations and potential areas to be used for tree plantations.

The report identifies 264,000 hectares as areas with high potential for tree plantations on the Lichinga Plateau, specifically in the districts of Ngauma, Sanga, Muembe and Lichinga, all relatively close to the capital of Lichinga district. Another 36,000 hectares in Maua district, classed as having medium potential, are identified in the report.¹²

The report states that the areas occupied by the project of the Malonda Foundation are not included in the areas given. The goal of the Foundation, according to information received at their offices, is that each company in partnership with the foundation will occupy 20,000 hectares, of which 60% will be plantations and 40% protected land. The aim is to occupy 170,000 hectares: 14,000 hectares in Sanga district, 138,000 hectares in Muembe district, and 18,000 hectares in Lichinga district. According to the Foundation's brochures, the potential area for tree plantations in the province is 2.4 million hectares¹³, comprising 18.6% of the total area of the province.

The consultants' report even recommends that *'the best strategy would be to create forest plantations associated with sawmills and furniture industries'*. It suggests that this will benefit local production for export. Various countries such as India and the Gulf states are mentioned as potential importers.¹⁴

Finally, according to information from UNAC in Maputo, the companies that are active in the province apparently obtained a concession from the central government in Maputo to plant 250,000 hectares in Niassa province. And they appear to have already received permission to occupy 40% of this area (100,000 hectares). The concession is for 50 years.

¹² Savcor/Indufor e Rural Consult Ltd., 'Zoning and identification of areas for investment in the agrarian sector and socio-environmental analysis for Niassa province, Volume V - Forestry Plantations', www.malonda.co.mz, accessed on 22 January 2010.

¹³ Fundação Malonda, 'Promotor e Facilitador do Desenvolvimento do Sector Privado', brochure, received in November 2009, and Malonda Foundation, 'Development of Niassa', brochure, received in November 2009.

¹⁴ Savcor/Indufor e Rural Consult Ltd., 'Zoning and identification of areas for investment in the agrarian sector and socio-environmental analysis for Niassa province, Volume V - Forestry Plantations', www.malonda.co.mz, accessed on 22 January 2010.

• The Investors

The main investors in plantations in Niassa province are:

- the **Government of Sweden**, which finances the Malonda Foundation through its international development agency (SIDA)¹⁵;
- the **Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF)**, which is a ‘forest’ investment fund based in Sweden and founded by the Swedish Diocese of Vasteras, the Lutheran Church of Sweden and the Norwegian Lutheran Church Endowment (OVF). Another investor in this fund is one of the world’s largest pension funds, the Dutch foundation ABP;
- the Norwegian company **Green Resources** owns 80% of the Malonda Tree Farms company, which is a partner of the Malonda Foundation.¹⁶

GSFF states that it has five local investments: four in Mozambique and one in Angola. Through these investments, the fund claims that it has generated about 1,000 jobs in communities that until then only survived on subsistence farming, and that its investments ‘*will result over a period of ten years in the reforestation, restoration and responsible management of more than 400,000 hectares of forests*’. It also aims to obtain certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for the plantations it is financing. GSFF investments in Mozambique have been made in the following companies: *Chikweti Forests de Niassa*, *Tectona Forests of Zambezia*, *Ntacia Florestas de Zambezia* and *Florestal de Messangulo*. Its local counterpart in Niassa province is the Anglican Diocese of Niassa.¹⁷

Another GSFF activity in Niassa is the ‘*5F Program: Forests, Finance, Food, Fuel and Future*’. For this program, GSFF not only has a partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Niassa, but also with the *United States Forest Service International Program*. The *Chikweti* company will take care of the commercial part of the program, establishing plantations and creating jobs, as well as guaranteeing ‘*environmental integrity*’. The other component will be community-based development, executed by the Diocese of Niassa. The 5F Program received its initial funding from USAID.¹⁸

The Malonda Foundation, the *Global Solidarity Forest Fund* and also the *Green Resources* company affirm that they want to achieve certification by the FSC. However, during the visit it was not possible to confirm whether or not FSC has certified any plantation areas in Niassa, nor whether it is in the process of certifying any of the areas.

¹⁵ Whereas the Swedish government invests in the expansion of plantations in Niassa, the Swedish Cooperative Centre has another policy, which is to support peasant organizations in, for example, Niassa

¹⁶ www.greenresources.no/Plantations.aspx, accessed on 3 February 2010.

¹⁷ Vasterasstift, ‘Global Solidarity Forest Fund’, www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

¹⁸ Vasterasstift, ‘Global Solidarity Forest Fund’, www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

FSC Certification in Mozambique

According to the FSC website, about 70,000 hectares have been certified in Mozambique according to the principles and criteria of FSC, in areas of two companies, which are not based in Niassa:

- the company LevasFlor is based in the port city of Beira, Sofala province, with a certified area in 2006 of 46,240 hectares;

- the company TCT Industrias Florestais Lda. (TCT Dalmann Furniture), also based in Beira, and certified in 2006, with an area of 24,821 hectares.¹⁹

According to the public report of the certification body SGS, the company Levasflor, which manages an area of native forests, is 'a public limited company that obtained the concession for 46,240 ha in the Sofala Province and the two shareholders are the Anglican Church of Sweden (90%) and the Lebombo Diocese (Anglican Church of Mozambique). The owners have subcontracted another concessionary, TCT, to undertake the management of the LevasFlor concession'²⁰.

This quote shows the involvement of the above-mentioned Churches in this company, and the relationship between LevasFlor and TCT, the other company certified by FSC. TCT, also certified by SGS, manages other native forests as well for the production of wood for its sawmill and furniture business. It is a nationally registered company.²¹

Besides seeking certification by FSC, GSFF also claims on its website that it wants its investments to adhere to relevant UN and ILO conventions on biodiversity, conservation, human rights, individual freedom, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and health, safety and working environment.[□]

According to the Malonda Foundation, their goal is to establish a plywood factory in the province and to process wood in a local sawmill, as recommended by the consultants' report on its website. Currently, *Chikweti Forests of Niassa* already has a sawmill in Lichinga, which processes wood from the relatively small areas of the oldest plantations.

¹⁹ www.fsc.org

²⁰ www.forestry.sgs.com/documents/sgs-ssc-8960-mz-levas-flor-sa2008-12-ad36a-gm-psummary-en-09.pdf

²¹ www.forestry.sgs.com/documents/9178-mz_-_tct_sa2007-12_-_ad36a_gm-2.pdf

²² Vasterasstift, 'Global Solidarity Forest Fund', www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

²³ Ipsnews, 'Climate change: carbon trading welcomed, criticized', Ipsnews.net, [Http://bit.ly/2wqtm3](http://bit.ly/2wqtm3), 5 November 2009.

1.3 CO2 Emission Reduction Projects in Mozambique Involving Tree Planting

On their respective websites, the Malonda Foundation, GSFF and Green Resources talk about carbon sequestration as an activity that they want to consider for their projects in Niassa. In general, many companies from industrialized countries in the northern hemisphere choose to continue polluting the environment and are therefore looking for places and projects to ‘offset’ their pollution by investing in CO2 emission reduction activities —the so-called CDM projects (Clean Development Mechanism), a carbon offset mechanism created through the Kyoto Protocol.

A Dutch consulting firm, *Silvestrum*, specializing in sustainable management and carbon assets in the agriculture and forestry sector, visited Niassa province in September 2008 to assess the viability of carbon credit projects in the province. According to the director of Silvestrum, Eveline Trines, a combination of improved agriculture, forest management and firewood plantations is being considered for Niassa.¹⁹ It is worth emphasizing that countless organizations criticize the CDM projects because, according to them, these projects are delaying the introduction of structural measures to reduce emissions in industrialized countries in the North, and these projects in ‘developing’ countries are not achieving the required CO2 emission reductions. Another criticism is that the companies and organizations that manage the projects will benefit the most.

It is worth emphasizing that there already is a ‘voluntary’ carbon credit scheme²⁰ in Mozambique in the Gorongosa national park in the central region of the country. A private company called *Envirotrade* enables the purchase of carbon credits for the tree planting project carried out by peasant families in a local community. The project is monitored by researchers of the Institute of Atmospheric and Environmental Science at Edinburgh University. The project relies on private buyers and also received funds worth EUR 1.13 million from the European Commission. The commission has criticized the project, claiming, according to an article in the newspaper *Sunday Times*, that ‘*the quality of the technical work ... [is] far below what could reasonably be expected of a pilot project managed by a university*’. One of the main concerns was how to verify the actual amount of CO2 (carbon) emissions being reduced.²¹

²⁴ Without it being recognized as a MDL project by the system of the Kyoto Protocol.

²⁵ Girling, Richard, ‘We’re having a party. Mozambique is still suffering from the devastation of civil war. But in one village, the people are paving their way to a healthy future – by planting trees’, *The Sunday Times*, 3 July 2005. Carbonoffsetsdaily, ‘N’ Hambita community carbon offset project in Mozambique accused of not being transparent’, <http://www.carbonoffsetsdaily.com/top-stories/eu-denounces-socialite%E2%80%99s-carbon-offset-project-3524.htm>, January 2009.

III. Chapter 2. Impacts on Peasant Communities in Niassa

2.1 Invasion of Community Land

Over the last four years, the main impact of large-scale pine and eucalyptus plantations on peasants in Niassa province has been the appropriation of community lands by companies. This has reduced the access of peasant families to their lands. All the local traditional leaders of the visited communities, called '*régulos*', and in the case of one small village we visited, the '*rainha*' ('queen'), are unanimous in their opinion. They confirm that they do not agree with the lands close to their communities being occupied with pine or eucalyptus, whereas in most cases they also say that there was no possibility to avoid the plantations, because the project has a top-down approach and negotiations were often done with '*higher traditional leaders*'. Furthermore, it is also a government project and the government has a lot of power within the country and within the communities. The government can even influence the appointment of traditional leaders, as seen in the community of Lumbe in Lichinga district, where there is one traditional *régulo* and another one recently appointed, who has links with the government.

According to the *Land Law* of 1997, which guarantees the access of peasant families to their land, companies, before accessing communal lands, need to consult at least 9 (nine) people from the community where they intend to use land for the planting of tree monocultures. A report, written at the request of the Embassy of Sweden in Mozambique, states that this consultation did not take place in an effective manner and consequently the communities were not heard nor were they informed about the projects.²² At the same time, the discontent that this causes amongst members of the communities does not mean that they can raise this issue with their traditional leaders, who are highly respected people within the community.

During our visit we also verified that no effective consultation within the communities had occurred, despite the fact that GSFF states on its website that an '*extensive community consultation*'²³ had taken place. According to the traditional leaders we talked to, first of all government representatives would come to the village and inform them that a company was going to come to plant trees²⁴. If the traditional leader was a higher *régulo*, the government representatives 'told' him to show the companies the areas where the pine and/or eucalyptus trees could be planted, but never was it suggested to the traditional leader that 'saying no' was an option. In cases where the traditional leader was in fact 'consulted', an agreement was made about the location and size of the area where the company could plant the pines and/or eucalyptus.

²⁶SIDA Helpdesk for Environmental Assessment, 'Não é uma questão de fazer ou não fazer - é uma questão de como fazer', Study on community lands, Niassa Province, Mozambique, October 2008.

²⁷Vasterasstift, 'Global Solidarity Forest Fund', www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

²⁸We visited communities in the districts of Lichinga, Sanga, Lago and Muembe, affected by plantations of the following companies: Tree Farms Malonda, Chikweti Forests of Niassa, New Forest Malonda and Fundação Malonda.

We noticed that, even amongst the traditional leaders, there is hardly any information available about the companies' projects, that is to say, there is no effort from the companies to give more information to the traditional leaders about, for example, the aims and goals of their projects in the region and the number of areas they will occupy.

The conflict with the communities started when the companies began seizing the land near the villages. About 70-80% of the population in the province lives in villages, which are usually located near the roads. The community's family farm plots, called *machambas*, are also close to the roads or a little further away, but still near the roads. The reason communities live and work near the roads is that there is better access to basic services such as health care and education, and transporting and selling their products is also easier. The communities mainly produce maize, but also sorghum, vegetables, beans, peanuts, rice, potato and cassava. Besides this, they collect fruit, have small animals (goats, chickens) and some peasants also have cows.

The companies are claiming exactly the same land that the communities have traditionally been using, since they also want to take advantage of proximity to the roads. However, one of the investors in the *Global Solidarity Forest Fund*, the Dutch pension fund ABP, states that '*the land used for planting [the trees] is exhausted farmland*'²⁵. But the traditional leaders affirm that the land occupied by the companies is not exhausted, but lies fallow, a common practice in rural communities in Mozambique. This means that after cultivating the land for five to six years, they leave it to 'rest' for a period of several years before starting a new cycle of planting. They confirm that they will need these plots in the future, saying that this land is for their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters. The companies, by occupying these plots, are clearly disrespecting this local practice, especially when these plots are close to the communities. And in most cases, the companies, once they have occupied a tract of communal land, disrespect the limits and try to seize other land used by the community.

The power a traditional leader has to influence where the company will set up the plantations depends on his or her status. The traditional leader of the small village of Bairro Qavago in the Sanga district told us that he wasn't involved in the agreement about the planting of tree monocultures in his region, since the agreement was signed by a higher *régulo*. Nowadays, his community is literally surrounded by *Malonda Tree Farms*' pine and eucalyptus plantations. He questions why the companies don't plant the pine trees at least 7 km away from the community, because they have means of transport and the community doesn't.

²⁹http://www.abp.nl/abp/abp/english/about_abp/investments/esg/esg_in_practice/Global_Solidarity_Forest_Fund.asp

But in the case of the Bandesi community in Lago district, the traditional leader Cásimo Awilo said that the government told him he could select an area for the company, in this case *Chikweti Forests of Niassa*, and that this in fact all happened as agreed. He said that he gave them a relatively small area compared to the total area of the community. The company, however, really wanted to occupy the whole area belonging to the community. He said that the land the community uses to produce food is good and flat, whereas the land that he gave to the company has many stones, *'it is difficult to hoe there'*. He mentioned that the company has already violated the agreement, seizing other land, and he regrets that this business of tree plantations is causing a lot of dissent between the traditional leaders.

In Maniambe, also in Lago district, the community gave certain areas to *Chikweti*, but the company didn't respect this and marked off *'a bigger piece of land than agreed upon'*. A community leader confirms that when the community protested against this, the company said: *'How can we leave that area now? We have already planted the trees and you are not able to pay us the money that we have already spent.'* One member of the community even said that *'it seems that they don't come to ask permission any more, they just come to give us orders'*. And he confirmed that the complaints put forward to the government have not helped at all. The *rainha* of the Maniamba community says that *Chikweti* first respected the community, but later started occupying more land. She states that nowadays they don't show respect any more.

The same situation is happening in the small village of Nthamila in Muembe district, where the traditional leader gave an area to the *New Forests Malonda* company that, according to him, *'is located behind the mountain and has plenty of stones'*. The traditional leader said that this is an area where *'our products don't grow'*, keeping the good land where for years the community has been planting and harvesting without needing fertilizer.

The same happened in the neighboring community of Ligogole, also in Muembe district, where the traditional leader Miute Said gave a small communal area, which he knew gave poor yields, to the *New Forests Malonda* company, and told the company: *'If you want more land, you'd better leave.'* He even said that *'the community does not trust them because they have not kept all their promises'*.

There was only one community in Muembe district, called Dendiza, that resisted the entrance of tree plantations. But afterwards, according to other traditional leaders in the region, a high government official came to visit to talk with the traditional leader of Dendiza, looking to reverse the situation. It is because of this that the traditional leader of Nthamila commented: *'Once you choose to forbid the plantation, you become afraid of the government.'*

In general, the traditional leaders affirm that it is very difficult to resist these kinds of projects because the company arrives with all *'the documentation in order'* and *'the agreements already signed'*. They consider this disrespectful towards the community.

³⁰ In November 2008.

³¹ Vasterasstift, 'Global Solidarity Forest Fund', www.vasterasstift.nu/PDF/GSFF.pdf, accessed on 26 November 2009.

The Case of the Mussa Community

One particular case took place in Mussa, where 27 peasant families had their plots occupied by the Malonda Foundation's pine and eucalyptus plantations. The Foundation promised to give another area to these families. What has happened now is that the families, who were used to planting without using resources like artificial fertilizer and pesticides, have not been able to produce enough on this other plot of land and don't have the financial means to buy fertilizer. This conflict has already been going on for some time now and at the time of the visit had not yet been resolved. The families were waiting for an order of fertilizer and seeds from the Foundation so that they could continue to try producing on the land that was given to them. UCA and UNAC are supporting their claim. It is worth mentioning that the Foundation also asked these two peasant organizations for support. However, the Foundation's idea was that the organizations would serve as intermediaries between them and the community, which UCA and UNAC did not accept. One of the affected peasants states that: 'This eucalyptus business, we don't like eucalyptus very much. We hoe and we plant. This eucalyptus is something for people in Sweden, for us it is not very useful.' (Idrissa Assani)

2.2 Food Security in Jeopardy

In general, the traditional leaders complain that with the expansion of the companies, there will be less land *'to hoe'* for the production of food, especially in the near future. Moreover, those who work for one of the companies (see 2.3) don't even have the time to work on their farm plots any more. According to them, the production of food is fundamental to fight hunger in the communities. A phrase repeated by several traditional leaders was: *'Nobody can eat eucalyptus.'* The reduction of areas for food production as a result of the eucalyptus and pine expansion can therefore affect the future food security of the peasant families and the food sovereignty of the region. Some traditional leaders said that if a company came to plant food, they would even accept, showing the importance food production has for these communities. As said by the traditional leader of Bairro Qavago in the Sanga district: *'The problem of the community is hunger.'* And according to the *rainha* of Maniamba, *'first the company invaded the fallow land, now they are invading the good land'*.

It is worth emphasizing that the peasant families receive very little help for the production of food. The traditional leader of Bairro Qavago said that he needs, for example, a tractor for the community because currently there is only one tractor for the whole district. Every district, with a population that can reach a number of more than 200,000 people, receives about 7 million Meticaís (US\$ 230,000) from the central government for these kinds of investments. According to UCA, often this money doesn't even reach the local associations, and even when it arrives, it is necessary to pay back the money within a short term of 7 months, which is impossible for the peasant families.

2.3 The Issue of Employment

The main argument used by the companies to convince traditional leaders to give up land for the pine and eucalyptus plantations is that they will create jobs for the communities. This is a new phenomenon in most places. According to the *Global Solidarity Forest Fund*, it is the first time that jobs have become available to these communities that have traditionally survived by subsistence farming.

There is no data available about the total number of workers employed by the companies, but it is a considerable number, between 1,000 and 3,000. A community member stated that *Chikweti* alone already employs 3,000 workers, but according to information from GSFF '*Chikweti has 730 employees at present*'²⁶.

In the community of Nthamila, the '*New Forests Malonda*' company is supposed to have 200 workers. The Malonda Foundation claims that in the last four years 3,000 people have worked for several companies.²⁷

We noticed during the visit that the offer of employment is a real one and that the companies have even employed several traditional leaders, further demonstrating that the job offer was an important aspect for the traditional leaders when giving land in concession. One of the two traditional leaders we talked to in the community of Lumbe confirms that: '*Basically we were corrupted by the job offer.*'

However, even the traditional leaders with jobs have a more critical point of view nowadays regarding the creation of jobs, because of what they have experienced in the last two to four years. The main criticisms are that:

- in several peasant communities employees were fired after almost one year, which made the traditional leaders realize that there is no job security;
- there is no transport available for the workers. There was a report that employees had to travel up to 50 km to get to work, and the 'white' manager had said that '*the black can endure this*', a comment indicating signs of racism. In protest, the community took possession of the company's transport, but they did not achieve anything with this action;
- another similar example is that the white supervisors train local black supervisors, but whereas the white supervisors always travel by car, they will not offer transport to the black supervisors. The *rainha* of Maniamba (district of Lago) adds to this: '*We want the money that the white receive, so that the black receive the same rights*';

³² Malonda Foundation, 'Promotor e Facilitador do Desenvolvimento do Sector Privado', brochure, www.malonda.co.mz, 2009.

- there is a lack of safety equipment for the employees, which has already resulted in the death of workers due to snake bites in the community of Maniamba in the Lago district;
- there are cases of employees who did not receive their wages for 3 (three) months;
- the monthly wage is low, some say about 1,800 Meticais per month, or US\$ 60²⁸ (equivalent to the minimum Mozambican salary), but a worker said that after paying income tax he does not earn more than 1,300 Meticais per month, or US\$ 43. With this money, the peasant also has to buy food, since he does not have time to work on his own plot any more due to the working hours, which are from 5 AM until 4 PM during the week and until 1 PM on Saturdays;
- when the worker becomes ill or has to go to the hospital, that is to say, he cannot work due to health problems, he gets a pay cut, even if he can show a doctor's certificate or prescription.

Nowadays there are employees with debts and they are afraid to lose their jobs if they complain.

A former employee, Batista Malomia Modoca of Nthamila, Muembe district, stated that in terms of income, it is more worthwhile to plant beans on your own property and sell the proceeds than to work for the company. He is a father of 10 children.

2.4 Other Impacts

Besides the above-mentioned impacts, the traditional leaders and the members of the visited communities did not mention other impacts of tree monocultures, such as their impact on the local water supply, something very common in Brazil and other countries with large-scale tree plantations. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of trees have been planted since 2007, so the plantations are quite a recent phenomenon.

That doesn't mean that there is no information and/or concern about the other impacts. For example, a community member of Mussa who worked in tree plantations in South Africa said: *'Where there are pine trees, there is no water.'*

With regard to the use of pesticides, a Malonda Foundation technician stated that they have a problem with termites²⁹ attacking the eucalyptus roots, and the Foundation uses pesticides to combat this. But they do not use herbicides, something that, according to him, other companies do. Even so, we have not heard complaints from the communities about this, despite the fact that this is a cause for concern, since the peasants in general are not used to using pesticides. There is a real risk of contamination because the farm plots, which are used to produce food for the community and for commercialization, are located in areas near the tree monocultures.

³³ In a job advert on the internet of the company Chikweti, the company is looking for a forest engineer to work in Niassa, offering a salary of US\$ 4,200, which is 70 times more than the salary offered to the workers of the communities.

³⁴ Known as *cupim* in Brazil and *térmita* in Mozambique.

The lower traditional leader of the Chiganga community, Lichinga district, showed his concern about the expansion of pine trees in the community areas by the *Chikweti* company. This expansion might affect access to an important communal area for fishing and bamboo extraction. He is afraid that the company will occupy these areas and he said that he has already seen this happen in other communities.

Another (future) impact that worries the traditional leader of Bairro Qavago in Sanga district is what the horizon will look like from his community, which is already surrounded by pines, even though they are still small. He is worried that the community will lose its view of the extensive plateau.

IV. Chapter 3. Resistance

It is noticeable that community resistance against the implementation of the plantation projects is no easy matter, because these projects have the backing of the central government in the capital, Maputo, or in the words of a community member, '*come by order of the president*'. During our visit, the Mozambican Prime Minister was in Portugal looking for more investments in the field of large-scale tree monocultures, which clearly shows that this is a strategic area of government investment policy.

Even so, the communities try to protest and resist the expansion of plantations in two ways. The first sign of their resistance was visible in the countryside: areas with burned pine and eucalyptus trees, forcing companies to have watchmen guard the plantation areas. According to community members, these were acts of workers as well as community members, discontented or even disgusted by the companies.

Another sign of resistance that is becoming evident is that the traditional leaders of the affected communities are getting organized and are looking for ways to limit and stop the expansion of the companies. This started after they noticed that the companies do not respect the agreements, that is to say, they have passed the limits of the areas that were allocated to them by the community. In some communities, the traditional leaders asked UCA and UNAC for support in this respect. In the case of the Bairro Qavago community (Sanga district), which is already surrounded by tree plantations, the traditional leader said that he intends to coordinate efforts with other traditional leaders so as to force the companies to return an area to the community, ensuring that they can use the land for the collection of firewood and other purposes.

V. Chapter 4. Final Considerations

When we were writing this report, we realized the importance of publishing its contents, since the process of expansion of large-scale tree plantations in Mozambique is still in its initial phase.

Even though this process is at an early stage, some of the negative impacts, as seen in countries like Brazil, which has decades of experience in dealing with these plantations, are already visible in Mozambique, such as the struggle for land between the companies and the peasant communities, the growing impact on food production and the problems regarding job security.

Now may be a good time to form an alliance between affected communities and supporting organizations with the aim of creating a dialogue with the authorities so as to reverse the expansion of tree plantations, and to look for other ways of improving the lives of rural people.

This WRM publication attempts to show that large-scale tree plantations do not improve the living conditions of the people. Quite the reverse, in Mozambique they tend to increase the poverty of the majority of the population, because they limit access to communal lands and put food security at risk, especially in the medium and long terms. Only a small group of people, namely the higher company ranks, profit from the expansion of plantations, together with the shareholders and the owners of the companies in question.

Now is also the moment to make the European investors who have been promoting plantations in the Niassa province aware of the impacts seen during our visit, namely the Churches of Sweden and Norway, the Dutch pension fund ABP (through their investments in the *Global Solidarity Forest Fund*) and the Swedish government.

Even though plantations have considerable financial resources, the local communities do not benefit from this influx of money. On the contrary, the plantations cause many problems locally and they do not generate sufficient work and income for the local people. The reality is that only a few benefit. That is not the case when looking at small-scale agriculture, which is practised by about 80% of the population of Niassa. During our visit we repeatedly heard peasants and their organizations say that regional development should focus on improving small-scale agriculture. This kind of land use has the potential to generate sufficient income for the local peasants if more funds were made available from the public and private sectors.

And we conclude that small-scale agriculture would definitely be a better alternative than tree monoculture projects.



- Pine plantation surrounding the community of Bandesi, District of Lago
- Plantio de pinus cercando a comunidade de Bandesi, distrito de Lago

- Advertisement of the inauguration of the pine and eucalyptus nursery of the Fundação Malonda, near the Mussa Community, District of Lichinga
- Placa de inauguração do viveiro de pinus e eucalipto da Fundação Malonda, próxima à comunidade de Mussa, distrito de Lichinga



- Women of the Maniamba Village selling charcoal on the road, District of Lichinga
- Mulheres camponesas vendendo sacos de carvão na beira da estrada, distrito de Lichinga

- Peasant women and children of the Maniamba Village, District of Lago
- Mulheres e crianças camponesas na aldeia Maniamba, distrito de Lago



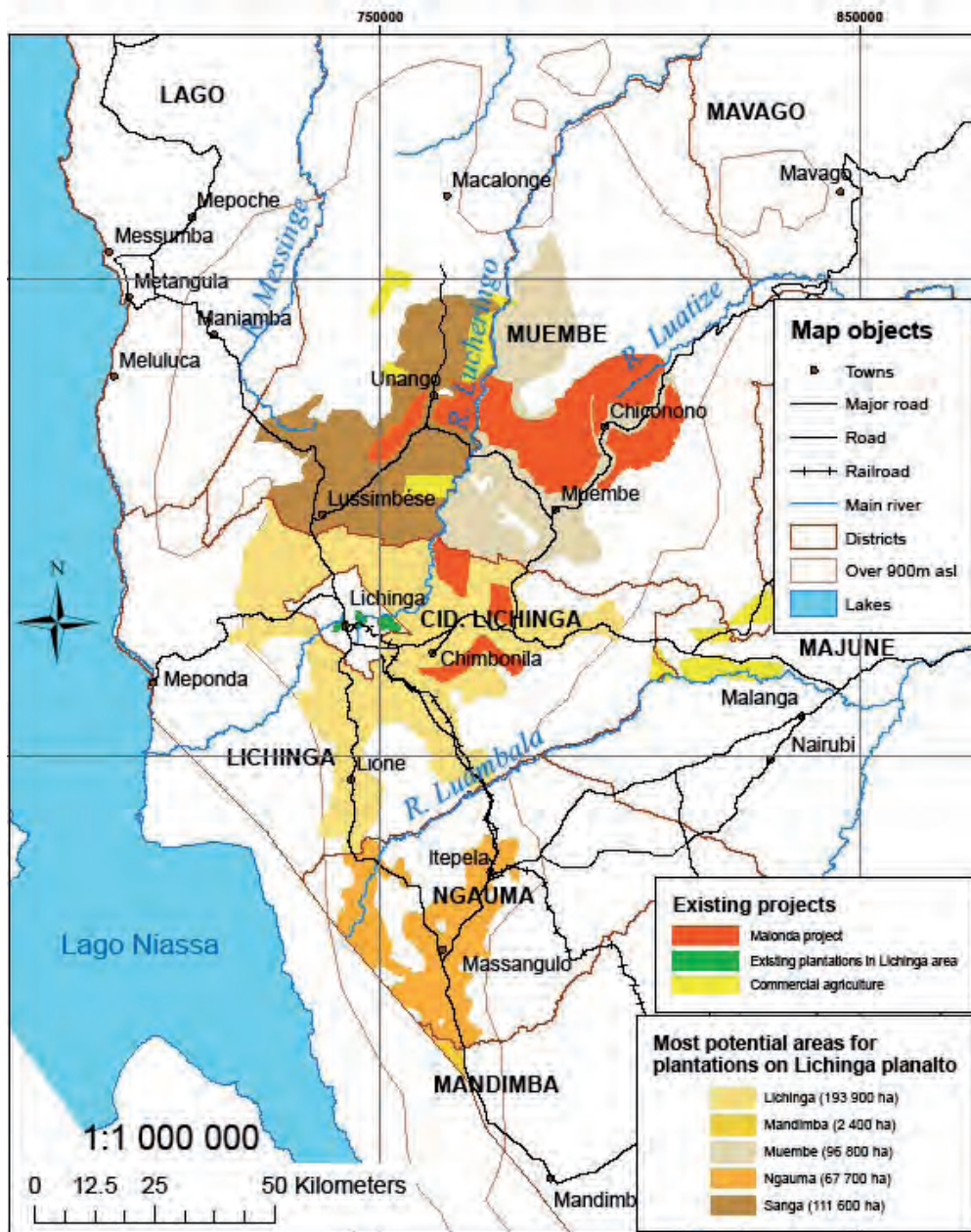


Figure 2: High potential areas for tree plantations on the Lichinga Plateau (Savcor/Indufor e Rural Consult Ltd., 'Zoning and identification of areas for investment in the agrarian sector and socio-environmental analysis for Niassa province, Volume V - Forestry Plantations', www.malonda.co.mz, accessed on 22 January 2010).

Figura 2: Áreas com alto potencial para plantações de árvores no Planalto de Lichinga (Savcor/Indufor e Rural Consult Ltd., "Zoning and identification of areas for investment in the agrarian sector and socio-environmental analysis for Niassa province, Volume V - Forestry Plantations", www.malonda.co.mz, acesso em 22 de Janeiro de 2010).



- *Plantio de pinus da empresa Chikweti perto da aldeia Bandesi, Distrito de Lago*
- *Plantation in of the Chikweti company, near Bandesi Village, District of Lago*

- *Casas e machambas de familias camponesas, próximas ao Lago de Niassa, Distrito de Lago*
- *Houses and farms of peasant families, near Niassa Lake, District of Lago*



- *Grupo de moradores camponeses/as, aldeia Maniamba, Distrito de lago*
- *Group of peasant villagers of Maniamba Village, District of Lago*

- *Placa da empresa Chikweti, próxima à aldeia Maniamba, Distrito de Lago*
- *Advertisement of the Chikweti company, near Maniamba Village, District of Lago*



