REPORT

THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSLOCATION OF THE PHIRILONGWE ELEPHANTS

FROM MANGOCHI DISTRICT

TO MAJETE GAME RESERVE, MALAWI

(3 June – 6 July 2009)

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THE
PRINCE BERNHARD FUND
FOR NATURE

RETTET DIE ELEFANTEN AFRIKAS e.V.
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Disney WORLDWIDE CONSERVATION FUND

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Date: 23 August 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conservation Solutions would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals who supported the Phirilongwe elephant rescue and translocation project, in particular:

Mr. Leonard Sefu, Director: Department of National Park and Wildlife, Malawi
Parks and Wildlife Officers and Scouts, Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Malawi
Mr. John Loudon, Mr. Nico Visser and The Prince Bernhard Fund for Nature, The Netherlands
Mr. Jason Bell, Director: International Fund for Animal Welfare, Southern Africa
Mr. Neil Greenwood, Campaigns Researcher: International Fund for Animal Welfare, Southern Africa
Mr. Patricio Ndadzela, Project Manager, African Parks Network, Majete
Rettet die Elefantien (Germany)
Disney Worldwide Fund for Nature
Mrs. Helen Singh, SS-Rent-a-Car
The Manager, Club Makakola

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1. AIM OF THIS REPORT

This narrative report aims to document the humane rescue and translocation of a population of African Elephant from communal farming lands in the Mangochi District of Southern Malawi, to the protected area of Majete Game Reserve. This report also serves to reconcile IFAW funding provided and utilized for this translocation project.

2. BACKGROUND

A population of elephants living amongst communal farming lands in the Mangochi District of Southern Malawi, have been embroiled in a growing human-animal conflict for the past two decades. These elephants were forced to move from the Phirilongwe Forest Reserve, in the Golomoti escarpment , by a massive drought in the early 1980's, and as a result have become known as the "Phirilongwe Elephants". It is important to note that these elephants have not lived in the Phirilongwe Forest Reserve for the past 30 years, having habituated themselves in the foot hills and floodplain between Ndowa Hills and Lake Malawi, where they found permanent water sources. The misconception that these elephants were residing in the Phirilongwe Forest Reserve and that the DNPW planned to translocate them from this Reserve, may have come about due to the elephants being referred to as the "Phirilongwe elephants". For the purpose of this report, these elephants will be referred to as the Mangochi elephants.

2.1 Problem Statement

More than 24 people have been reported killed by the Mangochi elephants since 2004 to date. In futile attempts to protect their crops, homes and lives, villagers employed brutal means of deterring the elephants from raiding their cultivated lands, water sources and entering their villages, including gin traps, cable snares and poisoning. The resulting mutilations and wounds inflicted by these cruel deterrents were evident during the 2000, 2003, 2007 and 2008 radio collaring exercises. The injuries inflicted on these elephants seem to have exacerbated their aggressive behavior when encountering villagers. The population of elephants was estimated at between 57 – 60 individuals during aerial surveys and collaring operations performed over the past few years.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Malawi (DNPW) have repeatedly been called on to deal with these "problem animals". It is the policy of the DNPW to use hunter scouts to control problem animals – either by chasing them back into

protected areas, or in the event of human deaths caused by a particular animal, to cull the perpetrator. The fact that these elephants were residing outside of a protected area, amongst a dense population of humans made it more difficult to resolve. Despite their best attempts, problem animal control did little to arrest the growing conflict between villagers and elephants.

2.2 Resolution

A number of options to resolve the human-animal conflict existing between the inhabitants of Mangochi and the elephants were investigated by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. Despite the opinion of individuals to create a new reserve in which to keep the elephants and thereby increase tourism to the area, no funding was realized to support this option and the logistics of relocating thousands of villagers to make place for the reserve deemed politically problematic in its self.

A number of community meetings were held between members of the relevant Government department, interested parties, Traditional Authorities, Group Village Headmen and members of the local village communities in the areas most affected by the elephants between 2004 and 2009. In 2007, the Prince Bernhard Fund for Nature, Netherlands (PBFN) funded a community sensitization program, the collaring of individual elephants in each family group in Mangochi and the monitoring and tracking that occurred before, during and after the operation. The majority of the attendees at these community meetings requested the Government to either cull or remove the elephants from the Mangochi district.

The DNPW's only viable solution to the growing human-animal conflict existing between the elephants and local communities in Mangochi, was to capture and translocate the entire population of elephants from Mangochi district to a suitably protected environment.

Malawi does not have a local game capture outfit, nor does it have the necessary expertise or equipment to carry out an elephant capture. Previous capture and translocations in Malawi were carried out by capture teams from South Africa.

Conservation Solutions' (CS) team members have been directly involved in both the collaring exercises and sensitization meetings since 2000, and the DNPW requested our assistance in this proposed elephant translocation. Our ability to raise funding, local knowledge of the Malawian culture, experience gathered on the ground and professional expertise in elephant capture and translocation were all contributing factors to this decision.

The author was identified by both the DNPW and CS colleagues as the most suitably qualified team member to embark on a fundraising exercise to procure the necessary funding needed to safely capture and translocate a population of wild elephants from within a densely populated environment.

2.3 Majete Game Reserve

The DNPW researched alternative habitats into which these elephants could be translocated. At first, Liwonde National Park seemed the most likely option, as it is located within 100km of the Mangochi District, has an existing population of elephants and it is quite possible that the Mangochi elephants are related to the elephants in Liwonde. However, Liwonde National Park is a small park (roughly 55,000 hectares) and already has too many elephants (approximately 850 to 900) for its carrying capacity. The park is only partially fenced, with dense human populations surrounding it. A human-elephant conflict in and around Liwonde already exists, with high levels of illegal poaching by villagers and crop raiding by elephants already the order of the day. It was also a strong possibility that due to Liwonde being so closely situated to the Mangochi district and without a functioning boundary fence, the elephants would leave the park and return to Mangochi. These factors led the DNPW to discard Liwonde as a possibility.

A sanctuary within Kasungu National Park was considered as the next alternative. However, the fencing of the sanctuary was nowhere near completion and the extra distance which would have to be traveled from Mangochi to Kasungu would mean a substantial increase in operational costs. Due to budget constraints and logistical obstacles, Kasungu National Park was discarded as a viable option for the 2009 translocation.

The DNPW finally decided that Majete Game Reserve was the most sensible choice for the Mangochi elephants. Majete is currently managed by African Parks Network (APN) in partnership with the DNPW. APN has recently completed a fencing project which has secured the entire boundary of the reserve with a state of the art elephant proof fence. Community projects set up by APN and the DNPW has ensured co-operation and collaboration with local communities on the borders of the reserve.

The CS capture team has been involved in a restocking program for Majete for the past 6 years. A wide variety of antelope (1500), buffalo (300), zebra(30), warthog(200), black rhino(6) and elephant(134) have been successfully translocated to Majete by CS. The management of the park and current law enforcement efforts has ensured that Majete Game Reserve is a safe and secure environment in which

wildlife can prosper and would therefore be the ideal sanctuary for the Mangochi elephants.

3. PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSLOCATION EXERCISE

3.1 Funding Raising

3.1.1 2008 Fund Raising

The capture and translocation of wildlife is a costly exercise, requiring specialized equipment, experienced staff and local knowledge of the environment in which the capture will take place. Due to constraints within the Government departments funding is limited. Funding to cover the costs of this translocation needed to be sourced from outside donors and conservation organizations.

The DNPW analyzed the cost involved in the proposed capture and translocation of 60 elephant from Mangochi to Majete, and requested the author to embark on a concentrated fund raising campaign. In January 2008, Ms. Lucille Labuschagne approached the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and APN for funding to carry out this project later in that year.

The necessary funding was secured and plans were set in motion to carry out the capture and translocation of the Mangochi elephants in July 2008. Valuable information and data had been collected on the elephants movements and behavior in the Mangochi district, and this was made possible through funding from PBFN in 2007. In 2008, the CS team was already in Malawi with their capture equipment, carrying out translocations for Majete. The DNPW wanted to utilize this opportunity and capture the elephants at the end of the CS operations for APN, which would have dramatically reduced costs. As July 2008 approached, concentrated interference from individual expatriates associated with NGO's in Malawi and championing their own interests, brought a halt to capture plans and saw the project postponed whilst the Government was requested to investigate alternative solutions. By the time the CS capture team was ready to leave Malawi, the Government had not resolved the issue. The Mangochi elephant translocation was postponed indefinitely. Sadly, during this time, reports of more villagers losing their lives whilst defending their crops against the Mangochi elephants were publicized as was the death of at least two elephants – deaths which could have been avoided had the translocation taken

place in July 2008 as planned. In August 2008, the Government responded to the pressure from local communities in Mangochi and recognized that the only viable option would be to remove the elephants as soon as possible to a secure environment to prevent further loss of life.

The DNPW again requested that CS assist them and stay on to carry out the capture and translocation of the Mangochi elephants. However, the elephant capturing equipment had already returned to South Africa, committed to other capture operations. As more than a month of time had passed from the intended capture in early July 2008, the escalating temperatures of the approaching hot, dry season also deemed it unsafe to capture and translocate family groups in such extreme heat conditions and the risk of mortalities would have been high. As CS's primary concern was the welfare of the elephants they did not wish to embark on a capture in unfavourable conditions.

3.1.2 2009 Fund Raising

In January 2009, the DNPW obtained a mandate from the President's office to go ahead with the translocation in mid 2009, and this mandate was passed down to CS. Ms. Labuschagne was asked to realign the budget and secure funding. From the time when funding had first been secured in 2008, APN now found themselves with budget constraints and were unable to provide any funding for the translocation in 2009. They did, however, pledge their full support and assistance to the DNPW for the Mangochi elephant translocation and promised to assist logistically wherever possible in receiving the animals. IFAW were able to hold their funding over until 2009 and CS confirmed that this funding was still available.

The initial proposed budget for the intended translocation had been drawn up in 2008, based on actual costs for the elephant translocation which CS had carried out in 2006, and the collaring operation in 2007. The down swing of the worldwide economy and weakening US Dollar rendered the budget insufficient to cover escalated costs in 2009 and intensive fund raising was needed to meet the adjusted budget for the translocation. Another factor which increased costs for the intended 2009 capture, was that the translocation operation would be an independent project and would therefore incur costs for positioning the equipment and capture team from both South Africa and Botswana to Malawi.

More than 70 organizations and private companies worldwide, who provide grants for conservation projects, were approached for funding. However, the impact of the current world economic recession was evident in the amount of negative responses received. PBFN continued their support in solving the human-animal conflict in Mangochi, by pledging a further grant for a portion of the funding needed. Despite not having met the full budget requirements, the CS team remained committed to assisting the DNPW in solving this human-animal conflict once and for all, and embarked on the capture and translocation nonetheless. It was hoped that additional funding would be granted from pending proposals still being processed during the capture period. A small funds grant was approved and allocated by Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF). In total, an amount of USD 189,000 was raised for the translocation project at the start of operations in Malawi. This amount would cover direct capture related costs for 60 elephants but would not allow for any contingency funding or additional operational or management costs.

3.1.3 The Need for Additional Funding for Extra Elephants

During the capture operation it became evident that the population had at least 20 more elephants than had been accounted for in previous aerial surveys. It was estimated that there were at least 80 animals. The Ms. Labuschagne then approached Rettet die Elefantien (Save the African Elephant Action Group) Germany (RDE) with details of the project and they approved a grant for USD10,000 towards capture costs. Ms. Labuschagne also approached IFAW again and as the principle donor, they were able to provide an additional USD28,800 towards the capture of these extra elephants. CS was determined to remove each and every elephant in the Mangochi population, without which the project could not be deemed a success. It would also have been against the team's ethics to leave even a single animal behind in the current conflict situation.

3.2 Logistical Planning

Once the decision was made to go ahead and carry out the capture and translocation of the elephants in Mangochi, a number of logistical plans were finalized and put in place to ensure the project's success.

3.2.1 Assessment of capture area in March 2009

CS members, Mr. Vickery and Dr. Uys, flew to Malawi to visit the proposed capture area in Mangochi district in March 2009. The purpose of their visit was

to assess the capture area, determine ground conditions and whether or not the roads would be ready for a start of operations in the first week of May 2009. It was apparent from surveying the proposed capture site that vast areas within the capture zone were still waterlogged from heavy summer rains. It was also determined that the roads and tracks would not be ready for grading, nor would they be passable for the transport truck carrying elephants for at least another month. It was also noted that Malawi would be holding general elections in mid May 2009, which would cause interference in the capture operations due to public holidays, political meetings and rallies, and an increase in road traffic. CS was advised to wait until after the elections before attempting the capture. Following discussions with the DNPW, it was agreed that the capture operation should be postponed by one month, to commence in the first week of June 2009.

3.2.2 Community Sensitization

During the same visit, the team met with members of the DNPW to discuss the implementation of a new community sensitization program, which would follow on from the previous sensitization carried out in 2007. The DNPW then undertook to meet with village headmen, Traditional Authorities and the District Commissioner to inform them that the translocation of the elephants in Mangochi would commence in June 2009. Thereafter, the DNPW embarked on an education program in which villagers , schools and teachers of the affected areas (with an estimated human population of between 30,000 and 40,000 people) were informed of the capture team's planned activities and the necessary safety procedures to be adhered to in order to safeguard the villages and their occupants.. A description of the darts and drugs to be used during the capture was given to the villagers, teachers and students and what should be done if a stray dart was found. A very thorough community sensitization program was run by the DNPW and this ensured that the capture and translocation of the elephants was completed without any serious incidents occurring, or the safety of the local community being compromised.

3.2.3 Elephant capture and transporting equipment

All equipment needed for the capture and translocation of the elephants had to be transported to Malawi from South Africa. A 35 ton truck, two flat bed trailers, two 6x6 crane trucks with 5 and 14 ton lifting capacity respectively, custom built transport crates and a mobile wake up crate, as well as a land cruiser needed to be positioned to Mangochi in Malawi from Heidelberg, South Africa. The vehicles travelled through six separate borders posts via Zimbabwe

and Mozambique. The CS drivers delivered the equipment safely to Malawi, despite a number of obstacles and unrealistic fines by traffic police and customs officials in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Fig. 1: The transport truck, trailers and recovery vehicles packed for the journey to Malawi

Fig. 2: The transport truck with assembled crates

Pilot Barney O'Hara, who has over 35 years experience in conservation and game capture, was the pilot of choice for this sensitive translocation. Mr. O' Hara has assisted the CS team on many game capture operations within Malawi and other African countries and was our pilot during the collaring operations in 2007 and 2008. His knowledge of the layout of the terrain and his piloting expertise was invaluable to the team. Mr. O' Hara operates out of Botswana and his helicopter needed to be positioned from Gabarone to Mangochi. Insurance, landing and flight permits as well as clearances were procured in order to position the capture helicopter to Malawi.

3.2.4 Accommodation

The author secured accommodation for the capture team and the IFAW representative at the lakeshore. This accommodation was in close proximity to the capture sites and the helicopter landing pad and served as our operations headquarters. Additional accommodation was obtained for the CS drivers and labourers at a local rest house, close to our headquarters and operations. Free accommodation was secured for the IFAW film crew at Club Makakola, as well as accommodation at reduced rates for the Aquavision film crew

3.2.5 Additional Transport

Due to the number of staff for the translocation project, the author obtained sponsorship of a rental car from SS Rent-a-Car in Blantyre, free of charge for the

duration of the capture. This transport proved to be invaluable to our operation.

3.2.6 IFAW promotional material

IFAW as the principle donor, who had contributed a total of US$177,800 for the translocation operation, requested that their logo be visible during the capture operation for purposes of IFAW media and fundraising.

3.2.7 Importation Permits and Licenses

The CS team arranged for entry licenses for the film crew and temporary import permits for the vehicles and equipment entering Malawi. Waiver of toll fees within Malawi were arranged through the DNPW and documentation facilitating smooth passage of trucks, carrying the elephants through roadblocks without delay, were issued by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. Importation permits were necessary for darting equipment and drugs to be imported into Malawi by veterinarian, Dr. Uys. None of the capture drugs and related materials needed for capture are available in Malawi.

3.2.8 CS Team travel

The CS team arrived from different parts of South Africa and New Zealand and met in Johannesburg and flew to Malawi on the 3rd of June 2009 to commence the elephant translocation.

3.2.9 Mangochi Road Construction

Upon arrival in Malawi, the helicopter flew the CS team across the Mangochi district to inspect possible access routes. A decision was made on where the best access roads needed to be graded into prime capture sites. A central site was also chosen to position the wake-up crate and a good, level access road was graded to this site, to enable the large transport truck to drive to the wake-up crate and back out onto the tar road with the elephants. The CS team hired a front end loader in Malawi, which was collected in Blantyre and transported to Mangochi by CS drivers. The CS team then graded all necessary access roads in Mangochi and repaired river crossings to enable the trucks to access these capture sites. These roads also benefited the local communities by providing easier passage for local villages travelling to and from their remote villages, schools, fields and local markets. The road building exercise was accomplished

within a couple of days after the team's arrival in Malawi and before capture could commence.

Fig. 3 and 4: The CS team embarked on road grading and building tracks and drifts, using specialized equipment which the team hired in Malawi.

3.2.10 Elephant Release Enclosure at Pende, Majete

An existing elephant release enclosure built for the release of elephant in Majete in 2008 was still in good condition and needed only minor repairs. APN (Majete) upgraded the enclosure by building an inner electrified cable fence. This ensured that should any of the Mangochi elephants try to break out of the enclosure, they would have to traverse a double electrified fence to do so. As the Mangochi elephants have not encountered an electric fence before, any contact with the electrified fence would hopefully deter them from attempting to breach the boundary fence and teach them to respect the fencing.

Fig. 5: The Pende boma gate which was opened 24 hours after offloading elephants, to allow them to leave in their own time

Fig. 6: The upgraded boma with the double electrified elephant proof perimeter fence

3.2.11 Chikwawa road to Pende, Majete

The road from Chikwawa to Pende is approximately 18km of gravel road and dirt tracks. Like most graded roads in Malawi, the quality of the road deteriorates rapidly during the rainy season. APN (Majete) assisted the project by grading the road before the capture and ensuring a smooth passage for the truck to the release enclosure.

4. TRANSLOCATION OPERATION

The CS team consisted of Dr. Andre Uys, Mr. Kester Vickery, Pilot Barney O'Hara and Ms. Lucille Labuschagne. They were accompanied by an IFAW delegation consisting of Mr. Neil Greenwood, Mr. Michael Booth (a cinematographer for IFAW) and a freelance photographer, Mr. Jeff Barbe. On the night of the CS team's arrival in Mangochi, they gave a power point presentation to IFAW on the capture procedures which would be followed during the translocation operation.

The film crew from Aquavision had arrived in Malawi a few days earlier to orientate themselves, start interviewing villagers and outline their filming directive. They were to film a documentary for the National Geographic "MegaMoves" series. (An additional videographer and stills photographer contracted by IFAW joined the team in the second half of the capture operation).

Fig 7: Pilot Barney O'Hara, Neil Greenwood (IFAW) and CS team members Kester Vickery, Lucille Labuschagne and Dr. Andre Uys

4.1 Operational Preparations for Capture and Translocation

4.1.1 Operational Meeting

On the morning of 4th June 2009, the CS team met with the Director, DNPW and a number of representatives from the relevant DNPW offices. A representative from IFAW and APN also attended this meeting. Discussions were held on the progress of preparations for the capture and the road grading in Mangochi. The DNPW outlined their community sensitization program and assured all that they were comfortable that information and education delivered to the villagers was sufficient enough to ensure a smooth and safe capture operation. The CS team outlined the capture procedures and safety regulations which needed to be adhered to during the capture. The DNPW pledged a contingency of DNPW scouts to assist during capture operations. A chain of command was established for both air and ground operations and the meeting was concluded with the satisfaction that all necessary preparations had been addressed and that the first capture would be undertaken on 8th June 2009.

4.1.2 Tracking, Monitoring and Gathering information

The CS team, accompanied by the film crews, visited the areas most affected by the elephants and spoke with local villagers to gather information on the elephants activities in recent weeks. This afforded the film crews an opportunity to interview people from the local communities and to get a feel of the general mood of the villagers. A number of individuals who had experienced personal loss in the human-animal conflict were also interviewed. The local communities were very excited that the capture was going to take place and voiced their concern that previous promises had not come to fruition. They were eager to see whether or not the CS team and DNPW would carry out their promise to remove the elephants. The overall general support from the local community for the capture operation was overwhelming.

During the reconnaissance flight for access roads and capture sites, the CS team also used the opportunity to track the elephants that were collared in 2007. A number of the radio collar frequencies were detected in the area we were expecting to find the elephants, which was encouraging. This exercise was made possible through the funding which PBFN had provided for the radio

collaring of these elephants in 2007 and proved to be invaluable during this operation. The team decided not to pursue the elephants further that day, so as not to disturb them before the actual capture operation began.

4.1.3 Equipment Assembly and Preparation

The equipment was offloaded at Club Makakola airfield and the wake up crate , which was dismantled for transport to Malawi, was reassembled. The crate was then repositioned to the identified central point of the expected capture area. A local fuel bowser was hired and kept on site for refueling the helicopter. All other equipment was serviced and checked before capture commenced.

Fig 8: Offloading the equipment at Club Makakola Airfield

Fig 9: The mobile "Frog" fully assembled and ready to be positioned to the capture site

4.2 Capture and Translocation Procedures

4.2.1 Capture Procedures

The same procedures were followed for each day of capture, as outlined below:

- The CS team was ready at 5:00 am each morning. The DNPW were notified the night before of the intended capture the following day. The veterinary team (Dr Uys and Ms. Labuschagne) loaded darts with the necessary drugs and prepared the darting equipment on the morning of and prior to each capture. Mr. Vickery ensured that the recovery vehicles were loaded with the ground equipment used in retrieving the immobilised elephants, and that all handheld radios were charged and working on the correct frequencies.

- The CS team, film crews and IFAW representatives gathered at the Club Makakola airfield at first light for a briefing each morning of capture.

- After refueling, the helicopter then took to the air together with Dr. Uys and an accompanying cameraman.

Fig 10: A family group is selected by the team in the and herded towards the recovery vehicles

Fig 11: Herding the elephants into a suitable clearing for darting often meant the pilot had to negotiate dangerous obstacles to keep the herd together

- The ground team would proceed to the wake up crate, where they were joined by the DNPW staff to await further communication from the helicopter.
- The helicopter tracked the elephants using a telemetry tracking device. Once a suitable group of elephants were identified for capture, the team in the air notified the ground crew who then repositioned the recovery vehicles as close to the capture site as possible without compromising the darting operation.
- If more than one group of elephants were found, the air team would select the group without a collar or with the least collars for capture. The reason for this was that it would be easier to track and find the collared group at a later stage, rather than trying to find a group without a collar by visually searching for them from the air.
- Once the darting commenced, the ground crew were notified and the time of the first dart was recorded. This enabled the recovery team to monitor the length of time from first immobilisation and determine when to start re-administering drugs to keep the elephants immobilised during the lengthy drive back to the wake-up crate.

- When immobilising a family group of elephants, the matriarch is darted first as once she is immobilised it tends to anchor the other family members close to the matriarch. Additional adults are then darted in quick succession whilst the younger elephants are darted last whilst. Once the adult elephants become recumbent the ground team slowly approaches the immobilized animals and the helicopter crew continuously monitors the elephants and communicates with the ground team on the condition of the elephants. When it is safe to approach and reposition any animal which may be laying in a compromising position, the helicopter crew gives the ground team the green light. The helicopter then lands to drop off the veterinarian then who joins the ground team in recovering the elephants.

Fig 12: A juvenile lying in the sternal position which compresses the chest and prevents adequate breathing, is about to be repositioned safely on its side.

Fig 13: Dr. Uys and Kester Vickery immobilise a juvenile before it runs away from all the activity around its mother

- Whilst waiting for the recovery trucks to get into position to load the elephants, the DNPW research team would number each animal and take measurements of height, foot circumference and tusk length for their database. All darts were removed from the elephants, and safely discarded and dart wounds treated with antibiotics to prevent infection. Each animal was then examined for wounds and injuries and these were treated accordingly. All mutilations and injuries were recorded for statistics. DNPW scouts provided on ground support by helping to position the elephants correctly on the truck and to help monitor individuals whilst the veterinary team moved between them. They also supported the capture team with crowd control in order for the team to safely recover the immobilised elephants and get them loaded into the

transport trucks. The capture team has built up a working relationship with a number of the scouts who have assisted the team on previous captures in Malawi. The Director, DNPW joined the team for one of the captures, together with key Group Village Headmen and the District Commissioner for Mangochi.

4.2.2 Translocation Procedures

- The front end loader was used to clear tracks off the road to where the elephants were lying so that the recovery trucks could maneuver more freely.
- During the preparations to load the elephants onto the recovery trucks, Dr. Uys, Mr. Vickery and Ms. Labuschagne carefully monitored each elephant's immobilised state and administered the immobilising "top-up" drugs intermittently, to maintain their state of immobilisation during the recovery and journey to the wake up crate. (See Table 1 for a list of drugs used in the capture operation)

Fig 14: Lucille Labuschagne administers top up drugs to an immobilised elephant and records the time and dosage on its ear with a marker pen

Fig 15: The front end loader cleared tracks to allow the recovery trucks to get next to immobilised elephants in difficult terrain

- The elephants were lifted by their feet (with specially designed atraumatic slings) and carefully positioned on rubberized mats on the trailers. The juveniles were loaded with their mothers, so they could be woken up together.

- Once all the elephants were loaded, the recovery trucks journeyed to the wake up crate, which at times was up to 30km away from the capture.

Fig 16: An adult cow is hoisted onto the recovery trailer to the cheering of hundreds of onlookers from the surrounding community.

Fig 17: Elephants being transported to the wake up crate

- The wake up crate was positioned against the transport crates' back doors. Once the recovery trucks arrived at the wake up crate, the trailers were reversed up to the crate and the mats, with carefully positioned elephants, were then winched into the wake up crate.

Fig 18: The recovery truck is positioned at the doors of the wake up crate and the elephants are winched in on a rubberized mat

Fig 19: Special care is taken not to overdose the baby elephants and their vital signs are constantly monitored.

- When elephants are woken up in the crate, an antidote to the immobilising drug is administered intravenously to each animal, starting with the youngest animals followed by the adults. This ensures that the

Fig 20: Kester Vickery administers antidotes to wake up a family group in the "frog"

Fig 21: Once the elephants are on their feet, they reverse backwards into the transport crates and the doors are closed off

calves are on their feet and out of harms way when the adults get to their feet. Once elephants are awake and on their feet, they generally tend to reverse backwards, thereby walking themselves into the transport crates. The doors were closed off and the elephants ready for transporting.

- At this point the veterinary team administered short and long acting tranquilisers to each of the adult and sub-adult elephants to keep them calm during the long road trip. These drugs are delivered by means of a pole syringe through the hatches in the roof of each transport crate.

- The transport truck then departed on the six to eight hour journey to Majete. Several stops are made along the way to check the condition of the elephants and to re-administer short-acting tranquilising drugs. This keeps the animals calm throughout the journey, particularly when descending the very windy escarpment down into the Shire valley. Due to the road being narrow, with many sharp bends, the Malawi Police closed the escarpment road to heavy traffic and large trucks, so that the truck with the elephants could utilize the entire road when negotiating the bends.

- Upon arrival at the release enclosure in Pende, Majete Game Reserve, the truck reversed onto the offloading ramp. A final dose of long acting tranquilizer was administered to the elephants, inter-leading

compartment doors opened and finally the back exit doors slid open. Translocated elephants are allowed to leave the crates in their own good time. It is important to note that all the elephants delivered to Majete came off the trucks very quietly and simply walked down the ramp, testing the air and taking in their new surroundings. In most cases they started browsing immediately and some even had a dust bath at the foot of the ramp. There was minimal stress during the release for the elephants.

Fig 22: The transport truck loaded with elephants departs Mangochi amidst thousands of cheering villagers

Fig 23: The elephants arrive at the release boma in Pende, Majete Game Reserve

- These particular elephants were left in the release enclosure for 24 hours before opening the gate into the Reserve. The Mangochi elephants had no previous knowledge or encounters with an electrified fence and it was important for them to be made aware of the electricity to teach them to respect a boundary fence. No attempts were made by the family groups to breach the enclosure fence and only two bulls broke through the fence. Two family groups remained in the enclosure for 48 hours after delivery despite the gate being open and only left with the subsequent family groups.

Figure 24: A family group quietly and calmly walk off the truck into the boma whilst testing the air and surveying their new surrounds

Table 1: Drugs used in the capture and translocation of the Mangochi Elephants

Immobilization (each dart)	M99(Etorphine) Immobilisation	Stresnil (Azaperone) Tranquiliser	Hyalunronidase Aids rapid drug absorption
Top-up(administered IV 10 – 15 min intervals)	M99	Azaperone	Sterile Water
Anti-dote (wake up drug)	Naltrexone and (Diprenorphine)	Azaperone	
Tranquilizing	Azaperone Short acting	Haliperidol Long acting	
Wound Treatment	Nafpenzal Penicillin for dart wounds	Broad spectrum, long acting antibiotic	Necrospray Topical antibiotic wound spray

TABLE 2: Capture Statistics for Mangochi Elephants, 4 June – 6 July 2009

MANGOCHI ELEPHANT TRANSLOCATION TO MAJETE GAME RESERVE 4 June - 6 July 2009

Date	Descriptions			Clinical examinations/ Physical condition	Collar Frequencies
08/06/2009	Family 9	7 Females	2 Males	Two trunk amputations	150.510/150.100
18/06/2009	Family 9	4 Females	5 Males	One trunk amputation, one snare wound on trunk with holes through	No Collars
20/06/2009	Family 10	3 Females	7 Males	Trunk tip missing to snare wound, laceration to one trunk from tusk	No Collars
21/06/2009	Family 9	4 Females	5 Males	No amputations or snare wounds	150.310
22/06/2009	Family 7	4 Females	3 Males	No amputations or snare wounds (Largest cow ever caught in Malawi 2.75m)	No Collars
23/06/2009	0 caught			Unable to move family groups or bulls into accessible area	
24/06/2009	Family 7	4 Females	3 Males		No Collars
25/06/2009	Family 9	4 Females	5 Males	One trunk amputation - half a trunk missing Smallest calf 2 months 70cm	No Collars
27/06/2009	Family 8	6 Females	2 Males	One cow blinded by old bullet wound, one cow with snare wound around her neck.	150.280
28/06/2009	Family 3	2 Females	1 Male		
	Cow		1	Snare wound around neck and amputated trunk	150.401
	Bull		1	Trunk tip amputation, deformed back foot from old gin trap injury	150.530
29/06/2009	Collaring		1	Bull collared for tracking and capture the following day.	150.510
30/06/2009	Bulls		2	One bull collared on 29/06/09 captured with a second bull in company	
02/06/2009	Bulls		2	Both bulls had musket balls wounds and one had a snare wound on trunk	
03/06/2009			4	One of bulls had old healed wounds and holes in trunk	
04/07/2009	Bulls		2		150.390
04/07/2009	Bull		1	Euthanased sub-adult bull; 10mm cable snare cut through leg above right front foot Snare embedded to the bone, leg swollen all the way up to shoulder, 3 x thicker than other legs; multiple bullet wounds in leg and shoulder - condition very poor, emaciated. No alternative but to humanely euthanase with Director DNPW permission	
04/07/2009			0	Followed up reports of 3 more elephants seen same morning (supposedly family group) Ground and aerial survey did not find any more elephants. Presume villagers saw the 2 bulls and the sub-adult which was later euthanased.	
Total Immobilized			85		
Total Translocated	83				

5. COURT INJUNCTION

5.1 Facts Surrounding the Injunction

The first capture got underway on the morning of 8th June 2009. A family group of 9 was captured and safely translocated and released in Majete that afternoon. The next capture was scheduled for Wednesday 10th June 2009. On the afternoon of 9th June 2009 CS were notified by the manager of Club Makakola that a copy of a Court Injunction had been dropped off at their reception desk. The name of IFAW, CS and APN were listed as 1st, 2nd and 3rd defendants on the injunction and this was why he was bringing it to our attention. We went to collect the copy of the injunction.

The injunction was granted in the High Court of Malawi and the plaintiff was an individual who claimed he was speaking on behalf of the local communities of Mangochi district and the villagers of Nankumba Village (which was a village outside the core elephant activities). It is also important to note that this individual was a private businessman with ties to expatriates, associated with NGO's in the Mangochi/Cape Maclear district. These particular expatriates had been instrumental in bringing about the postponement of the Phirilongwe elephant translocation in 2008. During the injunction, these individuals were very active in distributing false and negative newspaper and internet publications against the capture team, IFAW, DNPW and APN.

5.2 The Plaintiff's Claims

The plaintiff made the following claims against IFAW, CS, and African Parks, Majete (as first, second and third defendants):

1. The defendant's had arrived in Malawi and began capturing the "Phirilongwe elephants" without consulting the local communities of Mangochi.
2. The local communities did not want the elephants to be removed.
3. The elephants were in good condition and were not dangerous "unless provoked".
4. The elephants brought tourists to the area and thereby provided income for impoverished communities.
5. That other options to a solution with the elephants had not been investigated or researched.
6. No environmental impact assessment had been done.

7. That the elephants were custodians of the natural environment and prevented encroachment, water and soil erosion and destruction of the natural bush. Their removal would result in increased encroachment and destruction of the natural habitat.

8. That the elephants were being taken to Majete to be hunted.

It was evident that the injunction had been granted by a High Court Judge who did not know the true facts behind the capture and translocation of elephants in Mangochi. Furthermore, the Plaintiff had provided false information to gain the injunction. IFAW immediately secured the services of a law firm in Blantyre to refute the claims and move to have the injunction lifted. This process was fraught with interference and underhanded tactics by the Plaintiff and the expatriates supporting him. [It is interesting to note that the DNPW were not initially as a defendant in this matter and legally should have been the only defendant named in the injunction, as the translocation was a government decision and operation.] It was only after much pressure and insistence from the Ministry of Justice that the court allowed the DNPW to list them selves as a co-defendant. The CS team and DNPW were able to provide the court with substantial factual documentation refuting the claims and supporting the decision that translocating the elephants of Mangochi was the only viable solution to the existing human-animal conflict.

Fig 25: Village Headmen and community leaders meet With CS team members to discuss the injunction and to ask us to resume our capture and remove elephants.

Fig 26: After the injunction was uplifted, crowds of villagers visited the CS team to give thanks and celebrate the victory. PWO Bryson Banda (DNPW) assures villagers of our continued joint commitment.

5.3 The Reaction of Local Communities to the Injunction

During the time the injunction order was in place, the capture team were visited by hundreds of villagers from the local communities and villages directly affected by the elephants crop-raiding. These people were very upset that we had halted the capture and removal of the elephants. Once the claims and conditions of the injunction were explained to them, large groups of villagers mobilized and held meetings to express their displeasure with the injunction. They organized protest marches against the injunction but were prevented from carrying out their marches by the police. The villagers were angry that an individual who was not directly affected by the day to day loss of crops or had not lost family members in the conflict with the elephants had the audacity to speak on their behalf. Traditional Authorities (leaders of the district communities and of high rank within the Malawian village culture) visited the District Commissioner's (DC) office in Mangochi, upon which the DC summonsed the Plaintiff to appear before him. After discussions and demands by the T/A's to allow the removal of the elephants to continue, the Plaintiff agreed that he was not speaking on behalf of these people and issued an instruction in front of the DC, to his lawyer to withdraw the injunction. However, the following day the plaintiff renegaded on his decision and instructed his lawyer to disregard his withdrawal instruction. The community leaders then attended court in Blantyre and handed in affidavits in support of the elephant translocation and to refute the plaintiff's claims. Allegations were made by villagers that this individual was involved in ivory poaching in Mangochi and insisted they could show the authorities the remains of elephants that had been poached by the plaintiff and that his vested interest in keeping the elephants in Mangochi were for his own profitable gain. These claims were not substantiated but taken seriously nonetheless and the DNPW undertook to investigate these allegations.

5.4 Impact of the Injunction

The court injunction ordered all capture activities to cease, which was in force for 10 days in total. During these 10 days, the CS team had no option halt the operation and await outcome of the motion to uplift the injunction. Failure to do so would have possibly resulted in the capture equipment being impounded and the CS being prosecuted. This delay resulted in numerous "standing costs" accumulating over the 10 days. These costs were not budgeted for and had to

be carried by CS. Due to the halt in capture operations, the general mood amongst villagers and communities was fairly volatile. However, at no time did CS, IFAW or the film crew feel threatened. On the contrary, the impact of the injunction resulted in the community coming together in solidarity to support the DNPW and CS. During the 10 days injunction two human-animal conflict incidents occurred: a) the elephants raided a village's maize stores; and b) chased and severely traumatized an elderly villager collecting thatching grass and whom had to be rescued by armed DNPW scouts.

Despite several setbacks, the injunction was lifted on the 18th June and the CS team resumed capture the following morning. On the afternoon of the second capture, over 500 local villagers visited the capture team at the CS headquarters in celebration. Traditional dances were performed by the women and children at the meeting. IFAW, DNPW representatives, village headmen and senior community leaders attended the celebrations. Each village headman addressed the crowds and the CS team, thanking us and IFAW for our commitment, perseverance and support during the injunction and for continuing the translocation. The IFAW representative and a representative of the DNPW, also addressed the crowds and assured them of our continued commitment to completing the translocation operation.

Fig 27 and 28: Children and women from local villagers in Mangochi dance in celebration to show their joy and thanks at the CS team head quarters, after we resumed capture operations following the uplifting of the injunction

6. POPULATION CONTROL IN MAJETE

Majete Game Reserve covers an area of 75,000 hectares and has a carrying capacity for approximately 400 elephants. In the 1980's all the elephants in Majete were poached to local extinction. In 2006 and again in 2008, a total of 134 elephants were translocated into Majete from Liwonde National Park. With the addition of the

Mangochi elephants, Majete now has an elephant population of around 220. This has altered the projected natural increase of elephants in Majete over the next 25 years. Some means of population control will need to be implemented to retard the growth of the elephant population in the near future.

CS is of the opinion that immuno-contraception is a viable option in controlling the growth rate of a relatively small population, such as the Majete elephants. It is estimated that should between 50 and 70 breeding cows be controlled through contraception, the growth rate will be significantly retarded over the next 25 years. Current research and population control by means of using immuno-contraception (namely PZP – Porcine Zona Pellucida) is being carried out in Makalali Game Reserve, Kruger National Park and a number of small reserves in South Africa. This form of contraception has been trialed for the past 10 years and is proving to have favorable results with no side effects thus far and is completely reversible. Discussions are underway with APN and the DNPW on researching this option and possibly implementing an immuno-contraception program for elephants in Majete in 2010/11. Ms. Labuschagne will be driving a fund raising campaign for this project.

7. FINANCIAL RECONCILIATION

The proposed budget for the capture and translocation of 60 elephants in 2009 amounted to USD299,000. This budget total included US$180,000 direct capture, transport and release costs for 60 elephants plus other operational costs such as road grading, post release monitoring and project management costs. It also included a contingency budget to cover the cost of recapturing any elephants that might break out of Majete, post release.

Due to difficulties in raising this full amount, the CS team restructured the budget and cut costs dramatically, where possible without compromising safety and security of the capture. The team showed a willingness to reduce their personal daily fees in order to fit the budget accordingly.

A new, revised proposed budget in the amount of USD232,000 was drawn up for the capture of 60 elephants and distributed to possible donors.

At the start of capture an amount of USD 189,000 had been raised for the translocation of 60 elephant. No funding was available for road grading, post release monitoring, project management or contingencies. During the capture operation, when it became evident that there were at least 20 more elephant than accounted for

in aerial surveys, the CS team managed to secure an additional USD38,800 to cover 20 extra animals. Due to the limited budget, the cost of capturing and translocating the 3 remaining elephants out of the total of 83 was funded by CS. CS also covered the cost of darting and euthenazing the crippled bull elephant.

After additional funding was procured for the capture of extra elephants found during the translocation operation, the total amount of funds raised for the Phirilongwe Elephant Translocation amounted USD227,770.05**.** Table 3 below outlines the total amount of funding which was received by CS for the translocation project. Exchange rates are stated as per day of payment. These funds purely covered the direct capture related costs of the elephants. The contingency funding was forfeited and all other operational and management costs were partly worked into the existing funds available, the remainder being covered by CS.

7.1 Breakdown of funding raised

A breakdown of funding received for the translocation project is as follows:

Table 3: Funding Received from Donors for Translocation of Elephants from Mangochi to Majete Game Reserve

DONOR	DATE RECEIVED	PLEDGED	AMOUNT RECEIVED	BANK EXCHANGE RATE	TOTAL USD
IFAW	21/05/09	USD 100,000	ZAR1,044,200.00	Paid in ZAR	100,000
IFAW (DNPW)	07/06/09	USD 49,000	MK 6,800,000.00	MK 138.7755 *	49,000
IFAW	26/05/09	USD 28,800	ZAR 231,962.11	Paid in ZAR	28,800
PBFN	**12/05/09**	**EURO 25,000**	**USD 35,023.82**	**USD 1.401**	**35,023.82**
RDE	03/07/09	USD 10,000	ZAR 76,842.20	ZAR 7.6842	10,000
DWCF	29/05/09	USD 5,000	ZAR 39,473.50	ZAR 7.9805	4946.23
TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED FOR TRANSLOCATION					**USD 227,770.05**

8. SYNOPSIS

The Phirilongwe Elephant Translocation Project was successfully completed on 6th July 2009. A total of 83 elephants were translocated from Mangochi district to Majete Game Reserve without a single capture mortality. It was the first time the capture team had to remove a large group of elephant from within a densely human populated area. The combined expertise of the whole capture team and pilot, coupled with the assistance of the DNPW staff ensured that no members of the local community were injured or endangered during operations, whilst the elephants' welfare was at the forefront of the operation.

The 84th elephant found in Mangochi district was a young bull in an emaciated state, severely crippled with a cable snare embedded around its lower front right leg. The wound was badly infected, causing the entire leg to swell twice its normal size. The elephant was hobbling on three legs, with the swelling of the injured leg extending from the foot into the shoulder joint. The animal was clearly suffering immense pain and Dr. Uys confirmed that nothing could be done to improve the animal's condition and a slow and painful death would be the only outcome for the animal in its current condition. The CS team consulted with the DNPW and advised them that the most humane action would be to euthanase the animal. The Director gave his consent and Mr. Vickery and Dr. Uys euthanased the elephant. The DNPW officers removed the ivory for safe keeping at the Government stores and the carcass was safely disposed of.

Fig 29 and 30: The severely swollen and distorted right front leg (compared to the left front leg) of the young elephant bull that needed to be euthenased. A cable snare had cut through to

Of the 84 elephants found in Mangochi, 28 % of the Mangochi elephants had amputated trunks, snare wounds and old bullet wounds. Given the condition of these animals and the suffering they must have endured, coupled with the sad state of the

bull elephant that had to be put down, the CS team have no doubt that the only solution for the welfare of the Mangochi elephants and the safety of the local community, was to remove the elephants and release them into a suitably protected environment.

Fig 31: This cow had half a trunk, mostly likely resulting from a wire snare injury

Fig 32: A fresh snare wound visible after a wire snare was removed from this young elephant's trunk during the capture

The translocation was completed within 34 days and the CS team departed Malawi on 7th July 2009. The court injunction interrupted the capture operation for 10 days, which resulted in additional standing costs for the helicopter, the trucks, the CS staff, IFAW and the film crews. Despite this setback, the CS team remained committed to completing the project and did so with the minimum budget available and by contributing to costs of the project.

Reports from Majete, post release, are that the Mangochi elephants have integrated well into the existing elephant population. To date, none of the newcomers have attempted to breach the boundary fence and seem to have settled into their new environment. Overall, the translocation project can be considered a resounding success. The local communities in Mangochi publicly expressed their relief and gratitude at the removal of the elephants. Children can attend school, farmers can plant their crops and women can collect firewood and water without fear of loss of lives or fear of encountering aggravated elephants.

Figure 33 and 34: A radio collared family group and one of the adult bull elephants which were released into Majete Game Reserve. The translocated elephants have settled into their new environment with ease.

DNPW scouts and APN staff will continue monitoring the Mangochi elephants in Majete and CS will periodically share the feedback with donors on the elephants' progress.