

The Kirando Socio-economics Survey

by Steve Evison

During the last few weeks of August, a multi-disciplinary team worked in and around the village of Kirando (Rukwa Region of Tanzania), looking at the fishing practices in the area, socio-economics and environmental impacts of terrestrial land use practices on the aquatic system. This survey was the seventh survey of its kind to be carried out by the project, previous surveys having been already carried out in other areas of the Tanzanian and Zambian coastal areas of Lake Tanganyika. These surveys are designed to give a clearer picture of how people live and consequently how they affect the



The long boat journey to Kirando, Tanzania

environment. This is the first stage in developing appropriate project plans to sustain the environment and the lake's biodiversity through methods appropriate to the area and its people, trying to ensure that any restrictions do not impact negatively on the people, such that there are always alternatives, local beneficiaries and most importantly a local acceptance and motivation for the change. This will obviously link very closely with the environmental education component of the project and in fact, in many ways, they will all continue concurrently.

We were fortunate enough to be joined by a number of key people from the area including the Division Secretary, the Division Agricultural Extension Officer, Community Development Officer, Fisheries Officer and a local women's representative. These people joined us as part of the team during our time in the village and also returned to Kigoma to help with the compilation of a detailed report of our findings. The final step was to return with them to debrief at the Regional Office in Sumbawanga before they returned back to their usual work. This is a very important part of the project in that we are involving local people in the issues and the development of appropriate plans. We hope that through this involvement and training that their awareness of the issues will be raised and they will become key local contacts and facilitators for the project in the future.

Some of the team has been involved in the past surveys and most are based in Kigoma, working with the government services and local projects. We were therefore able to have a pre-departure meeting to discuss the general form of the survey and discuss appropriate techniques and logistics. In addition to this, it gave the two outside consultants (Dr. Claude Mong'ong'o from Dar es Salaam and myself from the UK) an opportunity to get to know

everyone and to assess expertise and appropriate roles. A few days in Kigoma prior to departure also gave time for the compilation of a basic field manual for the survey and future training. The Kigoma part of the team then traveled to the Kirando area on the Liemba ferry which runs up and down the Tanzanian side of Lake Tanganyika.

During our time in the field our work would usually start in the shade of a large Mango or Baobab tree. Here we sat on the benches and chairs until a full meeting had formed. We would introduce ourselves and the project and then discuss issues of importance in the village, usually ending up with analysis of the key problems and gaining some insight into the relative priorities that people placed on them.

At this point we would then split into subject specific teams and assisted by a number of people from the meeting, each team would then start to focus in more detail on their particular subject. This would involve us in a whole variety of activities from walking around the fields and discussing cropping methods and seasonal activities, to interviewing fishermen and even making model maps of the village to discuss land use issues and locations. All of this would help us understand in more detail the situation and the lives of the people. The other aspect of all of this is that we would try to involve groups of people and the discussions that developed would help to give us a better understanding of key issues, points of conflict and consensus and levels of local knowledge. They would also encourage local people to analyse their own situation through the process of discussing among themselves and explaining to us. This is the first step in the project process of raising awareness and building local understanding. On the foundations that we were laying here we hope that the local management and environmental education can develop.



The Village Meeting

During the week we were able to spend 3 days in the village of Kirando and to visit a further 4 villages. By the time we had finished the team felt quite confident that they had collected good information about the lives of the people, the place and the key environmental impacts. More importantly, we had sufficient detail to be able to make clear practical proposals based on the needs of the area and the proposal. Probably the most exciting thing of all, however, was the level of discussion and awareness that we had started to raise, and we feel that we now have some firm local partners among those who joined the team, as well as a few others who helped us along the way.

Steve Evison was contracted by the Lake Tanganyika Biodiversity Project for the Kirando PRA.