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Embassy of Sweden  
Maputo

# Reality Checks in Mozambique

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

Year One, 2011

## Sub-Report, District of Lago



# ORGUT

in cooperation with:

**CMI** CHR.  
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INSTITUTE

 **AUSTRALCOWI**

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

The Reality Checks are implemented 2011-2016 and each year field work is carried out in the Municipality of Cuamba, the District of Lago and the District of Majune in the Niassa Province. This is the annual sub-report from the field in one of these locations. In addition, an Annual Report is produced each year to summarise the findings and conclusions.

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Cover photo: Kajsa Johanson

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 The Reality Checks.....	3
1.2 District of Lago.....	4
1.3 Some Key Data.....	5
2. THE ADMINISTRATIVE POST OF MELULUCA.....	7
2.1 History .....	8
2.2 Institutional Landscape .....	9
2.3 Economic Adaptations .....	16
2.4 Socio-Economic Categories .....	18
3. SOCIAL RELATIONS OF POVERTY .....	22
3.1 Family and Household Organisation .....	22
3.2 Social Networks and Coping Strategies .....	23
3.3 Gender Relations .....	26
4. SUMMING UP .....	28
4.1 Meluluca as Community.....	28
4.2 Formal and Informal Institutions .....	28
4.3 Social Mobility .....	28
4.4 Future Prospects.....	29
LIST OF LITERATURE.....	31

**Map 1. Reality Checks Mozambique / Niassa Project Sites**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

## 1.1 The Reality Checks

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

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

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

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

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

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

The series of studies was initiated by an Inception Report published in August 2011 (ORGUT 2011a). Through that exercise, it was decided that the Reality Checks shall be based on fieldwork in three different Districts/Municipalities in the Province of Niassa that display variations in terms of geographical locations, access to public services and levels of poverty and well-being. The three areas selected were i) the District of Lago; ii) the Municipality of Cuamba; and iii) the District of Majune (see Map 1).

Fieldwork for the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check was carried out in September 2011. Methodologically, the studies are based on a combination of existing quantitative information derived from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and District Authorities; a Questionnaire Survey in the three project sites (in 2011 and 2015); key informant interviews in the provincial capital Lichinga and the selected Districts/Municipality; a set of qualitative/participatory methodologies including immersion with households in different socio-economic situations; and participant observation in the local communities selected for fieldwork (see ORGUT 2011a for more information).

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sub-Report (Year One) from the District of Lago (ORGUT 2011b). Sub-Reports from the Districts of Majune (ORGUT 2011c) and the Municipality of Cuamba (ORGUT 2011d) will be published separately. The main points from each sub-report will be included in the Main Report for the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check (ORGUT 2011e). A separate report will also be published on approach and methodology (ORGUT 2011f).

## 1.2 District of Lago

From the provincial capital Lichinga, there is a one-hour drive westward to the District of Lago. The eastern part of the District is located on the highland or *planalto*. It houses one of the districts four Administrative Posts (Maniamba), the districts second largest village (Maniamba Sede) and large areas of pine tree forests owned by international companies. Reaching the end of the *planalto*, there is a stunning view of Lake Niassa and an escarpment with a narrow road that takes one directly to the district capital Metangula.

Metangula shares characteristics with most district capitals in Mozambique: It has a formal 'cement' part housing the District Administration, other government institutions (including the Mozambican Navy), a hospital and a secondary school, old and worn-down shops stemming from the colonial era and a residential area for government employees; a busy commercial centre huddled around a large informal market with individual marketing stalls and 'restaurants' trying to exploit the traffic; a number of informal settlement areas or *bairros*; and (as a special characteristic of Lago) a busy beach with people selling fish, washing and collecting water – which becomes even busier twice a week when the steamer 'Ilala' arrives taking people and goods to and from neighbouring Malawi.

The District has a total population of 83.000 inhabitants, of which 95 percent live within 5 kilometres of the Lake (INE 2009). The main sources of subsistence and income are agriculture and fisheries, with tourism and coal-mining being central elements in the District Administration's future development plans (GdN/DdL 2011). The population is young with 45 percent being younger than 15 years of age. The main ethnolinguistic group is the Nyanja, with a small proportion of Yao mainly on

**Box 1:** *Development Objectives of the Government of the District of Lago 2011*

*"The main focus of the Government of the District of Lago for 2011 is: give priority to economic growth that will be reflected in the well-being of the population, [and] this development will be key in order to minimize the inequality between the communities".*

*The Government will continue to implement the Public Sector Reform, with emphasis on the well-being of the population and change of attitude and behaviour of the public servants and consequently an improvement of the quality of the services offered to the inhabitants [all] in order to secure a public administration that is transparent, efficient and responsible".*

the planalto. Islam is the dominant religion followed by 55 percent of the population. There are also many Anglicans (34 percent) and Catholics (9 percent), particularly in the central and northern parts of the District.

Administratively, the District is divided into one Municipality (Metangula) and four Administrative Posts. These are Meluluca in the south, Lunho in the centre, Cobwé in the north and Maniamba to the east. Politically the District (as the Province) has a history of support for Renamo, but Frelimo is currently the dominant party in the province as a whole. Having said this, traditional authorities – including chiefs or *régulos* and *rainhas*, headmen or *n'dunas* and sub-headmen or *chefes de povoações* – have a strong impact at the community level in Lago. The government representatives at the local level (*Chefe do Posto Administrativo* and *Chefe de Localidades*) work closely with traditional authorities both informally and though the recently established Consultative Councils – with Party representatives (*Secretários do Bairro*) and influential heads of Muslim Mosques (*chehes*) further complicating the political scene.

### 1.3 Some Key Data

To end this brief introductory snapshot of the District of Lago, we will present a set of key economic and social data as these appear in official publications from the District Administration and the National Institute of Statistics. Table 1 will be updated every year of the Reality Check, in order to give an impression of overall developments in the District. Table 2 will be updated at the end of the project period, when new comparable data will be available.

**Table 1: Economic Indicators – District of Lago**

Economic Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Area under cultivation (Ha)	23.828	-	-	-	-
Agricultural production (1000 kgs)	32.729	-	-	-	-
Agricultural extensionists (4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter)	0	-	-	-	-
Production domestic animals (1000 kgs)	6673.7	-	-	-	-
Forestation (New, in Ha)	6.050	-	-	-	-
Number of tourists	8.000	-	-	-	-
Fish production (1000 kgs)	4780.8	-	-	-	-
Energy (number of clients)	1,156	-	-	-	-
Energy (clients cut off)	497	-	-	-	-
INAS (Number of beneficiaries)	682	-	-	-	-
District Dev. Fund (No. of Projects)	117	-	-	-	-
District Dev. Fund (Total, Mt)	7,062,844.00	-	-	-	-
Distr. Dev. Fund (Reimbursed, Mt)	300.000	-	-	-	-

Sources: *GdN/DdL 2010a and b*

**Table 2: Social Indicators – District of Lago**

Social Indicators	2007	2015
Population	83.099	-
Proportion Female Headed Households	35.1	-
Primary School Attendance	65.01	-
Solid Roof Housing	1.18	-
Electricity at Home	4.38	-
Cell-phone	0.97	-
Bicycle Ownership	29.8	-

Source: *INE 2009*

In this first report, we will also present what the District of Lago itself sees as the main challenges for development and poverty reduction emphasising improvements in the organisation and quality of public services (Box 1).<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the District Administration, the main development plans were presented as i) better tertiary roads to connect the District, ii) exploration of mineral wealth (particularly coal) and iii) better exploration of Lake Niassa (fisheries and tourism) – all in order for the District to develop economically and to create employment.

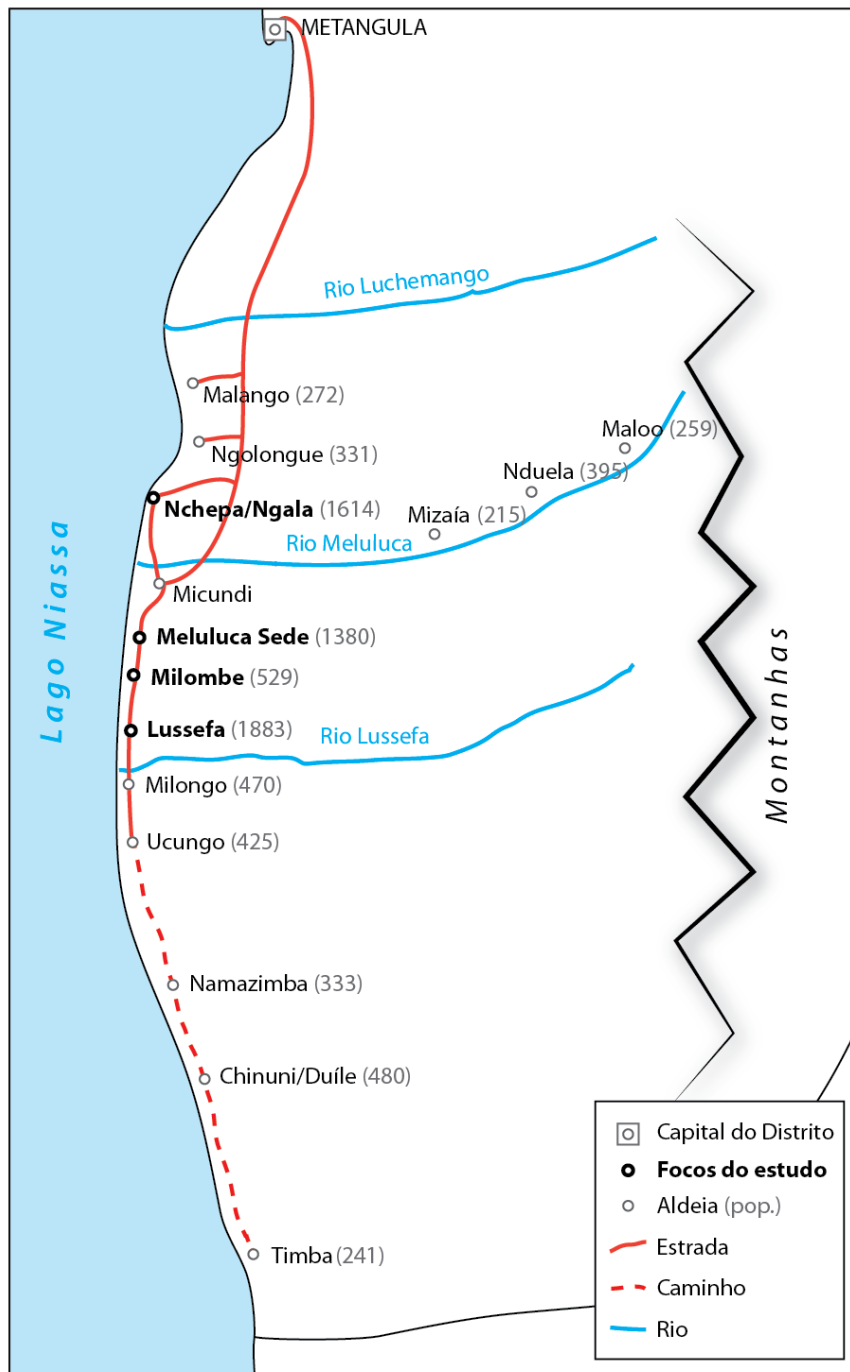
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<sup>1</sup> One District Administration employee underlined this point by stating “A vida da população está a subir, mas a capacidade institucional está a reair” (“The life of the population is improving, but the institutional capacity is getting poorer”).



## 2. THE ADMINISTRATIVE POST OF MELULUCA

To carry out the series of Reality Checks in the District of Lago, we have selected one of the four Administrative Posts in the District – namely Meluluca.<sup>2</sup> The Administrative Post of Meluluca is located in the southern part of the District, and was established in 2008 to ‘substitute’ the former Administrative Post of Metangula, which became a Municipality that year. Meluluca has a population of 8.500 people, scattered over a stretch of approximately 70 km in 15 different villages. The large majority of the population lives in the vicinity of Lake Niassa, with agricultural fields (*machambas*) usually located in the interior (see Map 2).



**Map 2. Meluluca Administrative Post, District of Lago**

<sup>2</sup> The choice was made in consultation with the District Administrator.

Meluluca has historically been quite isolated, with very poor road access and the Lake as the main means of transportation to other parts of the District or Malawi. Agriculture and fisheries have been the main sources of employment and income, with limited options for surplus production. Traditional authorities have had a strong position, with very few public institutions present and with poor education and health facilities. A new and improved road made in 2008 'opened up' parts of the area and has – as we shall see – had strong implications for political and socio-economic developments in Meluluca. The southern part (from the village of Ucungo and 40 km to the south) is still very isolated, and will be an important point of reference for understanding the implications of various development interventions.

## 2.1 History

The 'official' history of Niassa, Lago and Meluluca (Newitt 1995; Medeiros 1997, pers.comm. Tore Sætersdal) tells a tale of original settlements of hunters and gatherers, dating back to the Late Stone Age up to 18000 years ago and probably being relatives of the Ba'Twa of the Great Forests in Central Africa. Bantu migrants from West Africa started to arrive in Niassa between 1800 and 2000 years ago; brought with them their languages, agriculture, iron and ceramics; and settled both at the *planalto* and along the Lake. The main ethno-linguistic groups were the Macua, the Yao and the Nyanja. 'Nyanja' means 'a great mass of water' and '*wanianja*' means 'those who live by the water'. Historically the Nyanja were organised into political-administrative units headed by a chief or *mambo* (of which Cobwé and Metangula were the most important), districts (headed by *mwini dzico* that later came to be known as 'régulos') and collections of smaller villages (headed by the *mwini mudzi*). The Nyanja were matrilineal with the descent traced through the mother's lineage – although influenced by contacts with the patrilineal *Ngoni* through several wars. Agriculture, hunting, fishing and trade were the main sources of income for family groups.

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

The war of independence, initiated in 1962, led to an abrupt halt in economic activities and increased insecurity in Niassa and Lago. People in Niassa were active in the struggle and staunch supporters Frelimo. Although in many ways marginal in the colonial project, the Portuguese therefore had to spend considerable efforts in defending it until they finally lost in 1975. Upon Independence, however, Niassa and Lago again found themselves increasingly marginalised – this time in relation to the Frelimo state. The province was turned into 'Mozambique's Siberia', as 'non-productive' people (unemployed, thieves, prostitutes, street dwellers and politically 'undesirables' including political opposition) were sent to Niassa in what was called 'Operation Production'. At the same time, the 'civil war' between Frelimo forces and those of Renamo from 1983 became vicious as the latter had acquired a strong position in Niassa – partly as a result of lack of investments and development from the Frelimo government following Independence. At the end of the civil war in 1992, Niassa was generally regarded as the poorest and least developed province in Mozambique.

Seen from the point of view of a group of elders in Meluluca taking part in the Histogramme Exercise (ORGUT 2011f), the history of their area can best be traced through the traditional

authorities or ‘regulados’ and the suffering of individual men and women resulting from political events upon which they have had little or no control. A central part of the story is the way people have had to hide and flee – from the invading *ngonis*, from the colonial power and from Frelimo and Renamo during what they call the ‘family war’ – either by moving to Malawi for longer or shorter periods of time, by staying in the mountains towards the *planalto* or by hiding in reed-areas along the Lake when escape was urgent. They also emphasise how they could never be quite sure whether peace had broken out or not. Indicatively, their telling of post-war history emphasises how people now feel *safe* rather than stories of poverty and well-being. “Now we can produce and fish when we want and have the strength. We could not do that before”.

More concretely, in the presence of Rainha Chitepeta, her assistant (*adjunto*) and other elders traced their history from the vantage point of the village of Lussefa the following way:

*The Nyanjas of Lussefa [originally] came from Niger, Zambia and Malawi (from a mountain called Capilintiwa). From there the Nyanjas went to Mozambique [and] the provinces of Nampula and the District of Majune [in Niassa] – An older hunter from the Nyanja group who came from Malawi went to the top of a mountain and saw [a lot of] water. [He] informed the others, and some went with him to Lago while others remained behind in a region in Niassa called Ussa (which in Nyanja means ‘to be tired’) – At this time chieftainships [regulados] were formed, among which the most important were the regulados of Chitedge, Namahumbo and Xisindo – The Nyanjas are a people of hunters, who originally preferred to take out ivory – Massumba was the leader of the Nyanjas [who settled in the area of Lussefa] – A group of unknown people who came from Malawi took with them people from Lussefa as slaves. The régulo Chitepeta asked for help from some of the other régulos and together they managed to save and bring back some of the slaves. – In 1964, the colonial war started to be felt in Lussefa. Soldiers from Frelimo came and asked for help from the population by supplying children to fight against colonialism – The colonial government wanted to move the population to Metangula to stop the support to Frelimo. They came with boasts take people to Metangula, but the population ran away to the bush – The colonial war stopped in Lussefa in 1974 – In 1975 the people who stayed in the bush and abroad [in Malawi] started to return to Lussefa – Between 1976 and 1980 there was hunger because people continued to be afraid and did not want to go to the machambas in the bush because of the war – Between 1981 and 1987 the civil war threatened. People from other communities fled to Lussefa. This way people from Lussefa understood that there was another war. But this was not [directly] felt in Lussefa – Between 1987 and 1992 the population in Lussefa lives in fear, because they received information that they would be attacked as well – In 1994 the first presidential election took place – In 1998 there was an outbreak of cholera that killed many people. The population believes that the cholera was caused by contaminated water in [Lake] Lago – In 1999 there was the second Presidential election – 2004 saw the third Presidential election – In 2009 Lussefa took part in the third Presidential election.*

History and structural conditions are lived experiences that matter for peoples’ perceptions of themselves and their strategies for improving their lives (Bourdieu 1977 and 1990, see also ORGUT 2011a). As we shall see in the following pages the central role of traditional authorities, the close relations with Malawi and the Lake, social and economic insecurity, and the changing political context are all reflected in the daily activities and coping strategies of the population in Lussefa as well as in other parts of Meluluca.

## 2.2 Institutional Landscape

The complex institutional landscape in Meluluca is clearly evident when – after having driven about 45 minutes southward from the district capital Metangula – one enters the string of villages that makes up the Meluluca Administrative Post. The dirt road is built on a mountain ridge overseeing the Lake-shore where most of the villages are located. After having crossed





### Public Institutions

The main representative of the Government in Meluluca is the Head of the **Administrative Post** (*Chefe do Posto*), and his office of four employees. According to the *Chefe do Posto* his main responsibility is to represent the government, inform the government about the needs of the community, and see to it that government policies and interventions are properly carried out.

Formally the A.P. is divided into two **Localities** or *Localidades*, Meluluca Sede and Nchepa. However, no person has yet been installed as *Chefe de Localidade* in Nchepa and the *de facto* representative having close ties with the A.P. is the Bairro Secretary (*Secretário do Bairro*). Nchepa has been known for being a strong-hold for Renamo, but according to the Bairro Secretary 'the issue has been resolved'.

There is also a lower administrative level of **Villages** or *Povoações* with a *Chefe de Povoação*. These are appointed 'informally' through a combination of government and popular support. The larger villages (i.e. Meluluca Sede and Nchepa) are, finally, divided into **Village Quarters** or *bairros* with a *Secretário do Bairro* who *de facto* is appointed by the Party. He also usually heads the Party Cell (*Célula do Partido*), responsible for political mobilisation.

The economic resources available for the Meluluca A.P. to carry out its responsibilities is a mixture of **State Funds** for infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water-posts, schools and health facilities; possible funds from **aid-organisations and NGOs** to support developments in the areas; and the parts of the **District Development Fund** (the so-called '7 million') that is allocated to people within the administrative boundaries.

Decisions about the use of State Funds is largely taken at the central District level, where Meluluca 'competes' with the other three Administrative Posts. According to the District Administration itself, the budget is still not decentralised ("O orçamento ainda não é descentralizado"). They also argue that the budget they get from provincial and central government is largely 'tied' with only a total of 7.800.000 Mtn under their control for 2011, and that the money they have is fairly equally distributed between the four administrative posts. Local taxes in Meluluca amounted to 149.000 MTn in 2010 (P.A. Meluluca 2010).

Concerning the District Development Fund, a total of 12 projects to the value of 3.399.858 Mt have been approved in Meluluca for 2011. Of these three were given to associations in fisheries, agriculture and commerce, and nine to individuals – of which one is for fisheries and the rest for 'commercial activities'. As we shall see, decisions are made through an elaborate application process involving Consultative Councils at three different

levels. While the poor in Meluluca complain that projects only 'go to the rich', the District Administration on its part argue that the money had been better used for projects that 'concern many' such as tertiary roads and bridges.

In 2011 there is *no* NGO permanently present in Meluluca (Concern was instrumental for supporting the new road in 2008 but withdrew in 2009, and WWF is only indirectly present

**Figure 2. Most Important Problems in Meluluca**

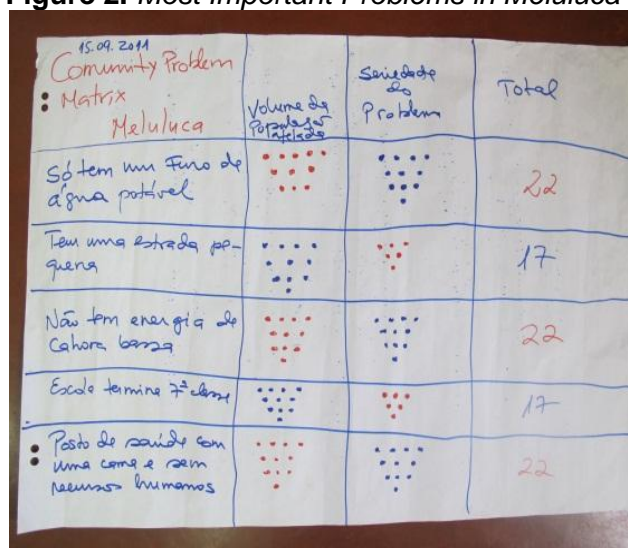


Photo: Inge Tvedten

though support to fishermen). In fact, there is only one NGO with permanent representation in the Lago District as a whole (i.e. the Mozambican NGO 'Estamos' working in HIV-AIDS) – which is surprising given the strong presence of NGOs in other districts in Niassa (see ORGUT 2011a). According to the Community Problem Matrix measuring the proportion of the population affected and the importance of the problem (Orgut 2011f), the three main problems in Meluluca are seen by the local community to be i) inadequate access to water, ii) lack of energy (from Cahora Bassa), and iii) the poor quality of the health facility – all receiving 22 votes and all being within the area of responsibility of the State. Two additional problems highlighted are iv) the fact that one can only study up to 7<sup>th</sup> Grade and v) the small size and poor quality of the road between Metangula and Meluluca and the lack of road between Meluluca and Timba – receiving 17 votes (see Illustration 2).

**Water.** There are only a total of 10 water-posts in the Meluluca A.P. for a population of 8.500 people, and in Meluluca Sede with the highest population concentration there is only one post that is functioning. According to the Baseline Survey done for this study (ORGUT 2011f), 48 percent of the households use a water-post, 13 percent use wells or rivers and 39 percent depends on the Lake for drinking and washing – as well as for fishing and other productive activities. Contaminated water is seen as one of the main reasons for the health problems existing in Meluluca.

**Energy.** There is no electricity in Meluluca, but three households are said to have solar panels. People have high expectations that electricity will come from Cahora Bassa, but according to the District Administration there are no immediate plans for this. According to the Baseline Survey, the main source of illumination among households is kerosene lamps or '*lanternas*' (94 percent), followed by firewood with 4 percent. The main complaint in the community is that the dark makes it difficult to walk freely around in the villages that children cannot study at night, and that lack of electricity "stops development".

**The Health Post.** There is one Health Post in Meluluca opened in 2008, and one in Ngolongué opened in 2010 financed by the owner of the tourist resort there.<sup>3</sup> The former (serving the main part of the population) has a clinic in very poor conditions (see Photo 1); a solar panel only manages to maintain storage for medicines; and access to medicines is often inadequate. 57 cases of malaria, 14 cases of diarrhoea and 10 cases of dysentery were treated in August 2011. The maternity ward has no electricity, and according to the nurse working there they have to turn away women who come at night without their own source of illumination. In August 2011, there were a total of 152 pre-birth consultations, 17 births and 296 infant-consultations. Many people prefer to consult traditional health personnel (*curandeiros* and *parteiros*) or (for those who can afford it) to go directly to the hospital in Metangula or Malawi ("where they discover more diseases". The large majority of the households had at least one sick member two weeks prior to the Baseline Survey, with as many as 73 percent having members with malaria and 36 percent with vomits or diarrhoea. Still according to the baseline Survey, 25 percent of the households have seen at least one of their children die before the age of five.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3. Bed for Emergencies**



Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>3</sup> There is also reportedly a 'community health post' in Chinuni and a person trained in first aid (*sororrista*) in Timba, but none of these are formally qualified.

<sup>4</sup> The Health Post reports that they have no cases of HIV-AIDS, but admit that people suspecting the disease are likely to go outside the community for tests.

**Primary Schools.** There are a total of 11 primary schools in Meluluca, with the closest secondary school being located in Metangula. Of these all but two take the pupil up to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (EP 1). The two EP2 schools (7<sup>th</sup> Grade) were established as late as in 2008 (Meluluca) and 2011 (Nchepa). The schools vary considerably in the quality of physical structures, access to educational material and human resources. Some pupils are taught under trees and without chairs and desks; there are examples where only 20 percent of the pupils in a class have books; and it is problematic to attract and retain qualified teachers. In the largest school in Meluluca Sede, the teacher/student ratio is 1:65. There is also a large proportion of children who do not go to school at all. In one case, the headmaster estimated that out of the children eligible to start 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in 2011, only 60 percent showed up and there are dramatic drops in participation both annually (girls tend to drop out at puberty) and seasonally (boys tend not to show up e.g. at certain fishing seasons). Most children go to *madrassas* (Muslim schools), but in Meluluca they only teach religious disciplines. These data indicate a primary school attendance rate that is much lower than what is reported in official documents as well as by parents in the Baseline Survey – where only 26 percent reported that they had children who did not go to school. Teachers and parents alike indicate that the problem is a combination of lack of interest from households and a school that does not really relate to the children – with Portuguese as the language of instruction being a particularly serious problem in an area where hardly anyone speaks the language.<sup>5</sup> Having said all this, there are also examples of youngsters from Meluluca who have done well, continued their studies and have qualified jobs as teachers etc.

**Roads.** There is broad agreement that the opening of the improved/new road from Metangula to Meluluca has been very important for developments in the community. Prior to this it was very difficult to reach the different villages, and nearly impossible during the rainy season. Most people depended on Lake transport (mainly with canoes) to get to Metangula, and from there to other parts of the province or Malawi. However, people highlight two main problems with road transport. One is that there is still a very long stretch from Milongo to Timba that does not have a proper road, and where people are practically isolated. And the other is that the road between Lussefa and Metangula is still too small to carry larger trucks with goods (including fish), and that it is often closed during the rainy season due to the poor quality of the bridges over the rivers.

Discussions around the Community Map and the Problem Matrix also reveal that there are a number of public institutions that are potentially important but not physically present in Meluluca sectors. **The police** is not there, and there are no places to detain people if there is a need to call them from Metangula. There is a community police consisting of volunteers without pay, but their impact is said to be small (as is their interest). **Agriculture** (now part of the District Directorate of Economic Activities) is hardly present and had, according to the Directorate itself, *no* extension officer for the entire Lago District in the last quarter of 2011.<sup>6</sup> The most conspicuous absentee is, according to the local population, that of the **National Institute for Social Support** or INAS. They claim that *no* older person or handicapped in Meluluca receive social support, and that they have not been there for registrations (*'levantamentos'*). This is supported by information from INAS itself where all 682 beneficiaries in 2010 lived in other (and easier accessible) parts of the District. **Fishery authorities** do, finally, not have any permanent representatives in Meluluca despite the fact that it is the most active fishery community in the District. However, the Institute for Development of Small Scale Fisheries (IDPPE) located in Metangula has a presence in the form of frequent visits of extension officers.

People in Meluluca have a relatively clear perception of what they expect from public institutions, and about the relevance and quality of the services currently offered. Table 3

<sup>5</sup> Several schools in Meluluca are involved in what is called a 'bilingual project', where Portuguese will be combined with Nyanja. We will follow this up in subsequent Reality Checks.

<sup>6</sup> Many extension officers in Mozambique are supplied by NGOs, and not by the State.

below – with data from the Baseline Survey – lists the proportion of households having used key public and traditional institutions six months prior to the Survey.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3.** *Proportion of Using Key Public and Traditional Institutions Six Month Prior to Interview*

Institution	Proportion of Households
District Administrator	5.0
Head of Administrative Post	12.5
Chief ( <i>Régulo</i> )	36.7
Village Head ( <i>N'Duna</i> )	19.2
Bairro Secretary	23.3
Head of Party Cell	0.8
Police (incl. community police)	1.7
Head of Mosque ( <i>Chehe</i> )	10.8
Traditional doctors ( <i>Curandeiros</i> )	5.8
Others	4.1

Source: Baseline Survey 2011

### Socio-Cultural Organisation

Traditional and religious authorities have long historical roots and represent *continuity* for people in contexts like Meluluca – where formal political representations have shifted and where the government is only partly present in peoples' daily lives. There are a total of 46 recognised traditional/community leaders in Meluluca, of whom 24 are of the highest category (1<sup>o</sup> Escalão) and 22 of the second category (2<sup>o</sup> Escalão). In the Venn Diagram Exercise measuring the importance and accessibility of locally based institutions and individuals (see ORGUT 2011f), chiefs or *régulos* and *rainhas* were defined as the most important institution, followed by headmen or *n'dunas* and religious authorities – first and foremost in the form of *chehes* or heads of Mosques (the Baseline Survey shows that 98 percent of the households in Meluluca are Muslim).

**Régulos and rainhas.** There are a total of five *régulos* (i.e. *régulo* Maniamba, Chingomanthe, Padja, Nhane and Gomane) and two *rainhas* (i.e. Nyanja and Chitepethe) in Meluluca (Photo 3). Traditional roots and influence vary between the different leaders, but they share opinions about what their role is: To 'look after' their community; to allocate land; to perform rituals; and to relate to the government and visitors. The *régulos* thus perform roles that are at the heart both of the lives and well-being of individual households and of the community at large. The position is hereditary within specific clans, matrilineages and extended families. *Régulos* who do not fulfil their roles properly or become sick are substituted by close relatives, often maternal uncles or younger brothers and sisters but never direct descendants.

**Advisors and n'dunas.** The *régulos* and *rainhas* are assisted by advisors in order to be able to follow up their duties at the individual village/community level. Advisors are often close relatives (brothers or sisters) of the *régulo*, while *n'dunas* are selected from specific families with deep roots in the community in question. In Meluluca advisors are often heads of the

**Figure 4.** *Rainha Chitepethe*



Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>7</sup> The Survey was done in Meluluca Sede and Nchepa/Ngala, with 60 interviews being carried out in each of the two settings (see Orgut 2011f for more details).



community courts that are said to “solve most of the conflicts we have”. The *n’dunas* relate to smaller issues in his community, including the collection of the person tax, but will refer more serious cases/controversies to the *régulo*. The *chefes de povoação* as the lowest level of traditional authority does not seem to be very prevalent in Meluluca.

**Religious leaders.** As noted above, practically everybody in Meluluca are Muslims. Some follow ordinances by praying five regularly and older women tend to wear a headscarf (*parda*), but there are also younger women who do not wear *parda* and younger boys who drink alcohol.<sup>8</sup> The Mosques have a central place in Meluluca, and the *chehes* are influential people not only in religious matters but also in the community at large. They emphasise the importance of praying, that people respect each other and that there is peace in the community.<sup>9</sup> Their influence is strong through the Muslim schools or *madrassas* that practically all children attend from 4-5 years of age. They have central roles during initiation rites for boys and girls alike. And their economic clout can be exemplified by the construction of a large new brick Mosque in Meluluca Sede. There are Anglican and Catholic churches, but these do not seem to be very active and only involve 2 percent of the population.

### *Institutional Overlaps*

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

One is the **remuneration of traditional authorities** through the government payroll. *Régulos* and *rainhas* receive a tri-monthly payment of 2.400 Mtn or 800 Mtn per month (1<sup>st</sup> Scale), plus uniforms to be used at special occasions such as visits from provincial or central government. The N’Dunas receive a tri-monthly payment of 1.200 Mt or 400 Mt per month (2<sup>nd</sup> Scale). The payment has variously been described as well-deserved remuneration for people who perform important tasks for the government, and as an attempt by government to co-opt the traditional authorities.

The second way the public and traditional institutions ‘overlap’ is through the **Consultative Council** of the Administrative Post. The Council was established in 2008, with the objective of contributing to the development of Meluluca in a broad sense. It has 38 members, of whom many are traditional and religious leaders and 6 are women.<sup>10</sup> The Council is headed by the *Chefe do Posto*. In practise its main task has been to assess and approve applications from individuals and associations for the ‘7 million’ scheme, to be submitted to the District Consultative Council for final approval or disapproval (see below).

While the **Frelimo Party** is not a ‘public institution’ as such, it is closely intertwined with the government authorities. Its representatives do not share office with the Administrative Post as is common in many other Districts, but they are represented in the form of a number of *Secretários* particularly in the larger communities. In areas where the opposition is believed to be strong they seem to be particularly active. In other areas their role is primarily related to mobilisation in their *célula* around the time of elections or other major political events. The *Secretários* also receive remuneration at the *Primeiro Escalão* level, which according to many community members does not imply that they have the same impact as the traditional

<sup>8</sup> Having said this, meeting drunk people is much more rare in Meluluka than what is the case in many other parts of Mozambique.

<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the Venn Diagramme group explicitly stated that currently impact of the *chehes* is somewhat reduced due to ‘infighting’...

<sup>10</sup> According to relevant laws, the proportion of women shall be 30 percent.

leaders. We did not locate any official representatives of the opposition parties Renamo or Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDD).

## 2.3 Economic Adaptations

Entering Meluluca for the first time, it all seems to be about **fishing**. The majestic Lake Niassa never escapes the view; the shoreline is filled with *chatas* (small boats with outboard motors) and canoes made out of trunks; fish is dried on huge stalls on the beaches; and outside dwellings men mend large fishing nets. When fish is landed early in the morning or late at night, the beach is full of people. However, fishing is also a source of subsistence and income showing large variations between seasons and fishermen. At the time of our fieldwork, the famous Lake Niassa *uusipa* – being an indigenous sardine specie – dominated the scene. The best boats caught up to 70 buckets of fish during a night, while others caught nothing.<sup>11</sup> Some of the owners (*patrões*) of boats and nets are influential and well-off people, while others (*marinheiros*) complain “*somos cansados de pescar. É muito tralaho e pouco rendimento*” (“we are tired of fishing. It is a lot of work with little pay”). According to the Baseline Survey, 26 percent of the households in Meluluca have fisheries as their main source of subsistence income and 57 percent are involved in production, processing or marketing in some way or another. Of those involved, as many as 85 percent sell fish.

**Agriculture** is, still according to the Baseline Survey, the most important source of subsistence and income for 49 percent of the households in Meluluca, while all households have access to at least one agricultural field or *machamba*. 43 percent sell parts of their agricultural production. Most *machambas* are located inland, but relatively close to the villages along the Lake. Women and children (and men when clearing fields or other ‘male’ tasks) tend to leave early in the morning at around 4-5 o’clock, and stay until the sun becomes too unbearable between 09.00 and 10.00 hours. The main products are (in order of the proportion of households producing them) cassava or *mandioca* (97 percent), maize (86 percent) and sweet potato (75 percent). Additional crops produced (still in order of importance) are squash, rice, tomato, peanuts, beans, banana and sesame. Some also have their fields further away – usually to farm in areas inundated by rivers making it possible to produce several harvests a year. In such cases, all or parts of the household will move to the fields for longer periods of time. Some are also permanently settled inland in areas suitable for agriculture, such as the villages of Nduela, Mazaia and Maloo. Most households have small domestic animals such as chickens (60 percent), some have ducks (28 percent) and goats (18 percent, only slaughtered for ceremonies), while only four percent have cattle that are much more valuable both culturally and economically.

While agriculture and fishing dominate production for subsistence and income, there are also a number of other **informal economic activities**. 72 percent of the households in the Baseline Survey are involved in such alternatives. They include small scale traders (selling mainly agricultural products along roads); traders (usually selling basic consumer goods such as flour, sugar, cooking oil and soap from marketing stalls or ‘*bancas*’); *comerciantes* with

**Figure 5. Fishing Boats and Gear**

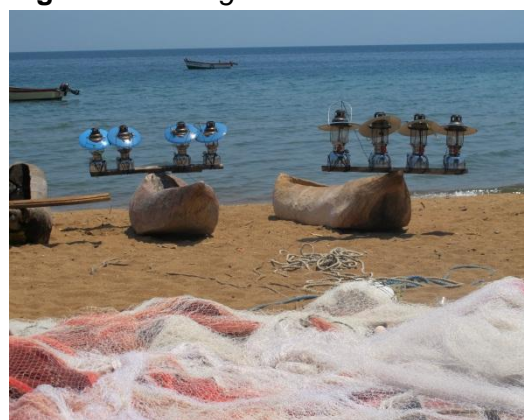


Photo: Inge Tvedten

<sup>11</sup> Being a good fisherman requires superior skills in reading the moon and the currents, as well as a good crew.

shops or '*lojas*' having a larger variety of goods and commodities of which much is imported from Malawi (Figure 6); production and sale of firewood or (much more rarely) coal; producers of clay blocks or *tijolos* that is the most common building material in Meluluca; carpenters (usually on a small scale producing doors, window-frames and agricultural tools such as *enxada*, *machado* and *charrua*); tailors (who tend to mend old rather than produce new clothes); people producing basic utensils such as mats (*esteiras*), pots and pans; people doing traditional medicine (*curandeiros*) and finally piecemeal work (*ganho ganho*) in the fields or homes of others. People argue that households who do not have alternative sources of income outside agriculture are often the poorest and most vulnerable – in particular during the months prior to harvest or what people call the 'pockets of hunger' ('*bolsos do fome*') when provisions from the previous agricultural season are running out.

As noted above, economic life in Meluluca has been strongly affected by the construction of the tertiary road between Metangula and Meleluca Sede in 2008. Prior to that year, the main means of transport was canoes and a very poor dirt road that was more often impassable than not and did not support larger vehicles. With the economic potential of Meluluca particularly in fishing, the road

**Figure 6. Local Shop with International Goods**



Photo: Inge Tvedten

opened up for trade and the arrival of *comerciantes*. The perhaps most significant indication of this is the increase in the number of larger fishing boats from 1 to 35 between 2008 and 2011 (the number of the much less productive canoes has seen a smaller increase in number to 221), and the concomitant frequent arrival of trucks of *comerciantes* from Lichinga and Metangula who sell the fish not only in Niassa but also as far afield as Nampula, Malawi and Tanzania.

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

Moving around in the villages, however, it is equally clear that far from everybody has benefitted from recent economic developments. It is rare to see adults or children with physical signs of extreme poverty (lifeless eyes, 'burnt' hair, swollen legs), but many houses are of poor standard and are made of unburnt clay (which makes them precarious and – after a while – in danger of collapsing); women and children in front of the dwelling primarily prepare *mandioca* directly from the field (which is a sign of poverty); when people receive visitors they go and get a weed mat (*esteira*) or a simple brick (rather than chairs which is a sign of well-being and fulfils local expectations of hospitality); and there are 'destitutes' in

very poor conditions in terms of clothes and general appearance. As seen from Table 4 below, the Baseline Study confirms that there are considerable differences in poverty and well-being – even though cases of extreme need seem to be rare.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 4. Key Socio-Economic Indicators (Income, Expenditure and Assets)**

Indicator	Percent
HHs selling agricultural products	43.3
HHs selling fish	49.2
HHs spending less than 250 MTn per week	36.6
HHs spending more than 1000 MTn per week	20.1
HHs with radio	67.5
HHs with telephone	33.3
HHs with bicycle	35.0
HHs with chairs	43.3
HHs without <i>esteira</i>	5.8

Source: Baseline Survey 2011

## 2.4 Socio-Economic Categories

People in Meluluca have clear perceptions about there being different levels of poverty and well-being (the general word in Nyanja for 'poverty is *umphawi*, and for well-being is *olemela*). Their definitions tend to take two issues into account: The level of material poverty, and social relationships – or the extent to which a household or an individual is involved in social networks or socially isolated. The latter relates directly to the issue of vulnerability, or how the household or the individual will be able to cope with a situation of sudden shocks such as loss of income or extraordinary expenses for example related to death or illness. More concretely, the exercise of Wealth Ranking carried out for this study revealed that people in Meluluca distinguish between four levels of poverty and three levels of well-being in their own vernacular (Table 5, see also ORGUT 2011f).

**Table 5: Levels and Characteristics of Poverty and Well-Being**

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

<sup>12</sup> No-one in Meluluca is formally employed. The absence of forest companies, which is a major source of employment and controversy in other districts in Namupula, is explained locally by saying the their *régulos* refused to give away land – while the District Administration says that the companies are not really interested in Lago because of the difficult access by road.



The very poorest category (*usuwedwa*) are people who 'have nothing', and who often (but not always) are single because their situation is so precarious that they are not in a position to establish a household (usually men) or get married (usually women). The community also separates between people who are in such a situation even though they work hard to cope and improve their lives, and people who are 'lazy' and hence 'blamed' by the community for their own difficult situation (i.e. the *Chilecua*). The other two categories of 'poor' are made up of physically or mentally handicapped (the *Maciquine*) and older men and women without support from their family (the *Ukalama*). Their situation is, as we shall see, complex. Traditionally elders and handicapped were supposed to be taken care of by their extended families, but many families are not in a position to – or not interested in – doing so.

The main category of the better-off is the *Odjifunila*. Significantly, their main characteristic is that they 'do not depend on others' and hence are in a position to relate to their daily lives as well as situations of sudden shocks both economically and socially. The second category, the *Opata*, are characterised by being in a position to not only take care of themselves but also of supporting others in the form of employment and transfers in cash or kind to needy relatives. People in Meluluca claim that there are no people in the community of the best-off or *Olemela* category in their community. However, as we shall see there are people who have social relationships and receive support with *olemas* living outside Meluluca – often denoted as (matrilineal) uncles or *tios*.

To systematically pursue the socio-economic and cultural implications of each of these categories, we have identified seven individual households that belong to each one of them. These will represent a 'panel of households' that we will follow closely throughout the Reality Checks. Here we will only give a brief presentation of each one, coming back to them in more detail as we move along in the study-series.<sup>13</sup>

**Family 1 (Usuwedwa I).** The household lives in Milombe, in a small house with only one room. The couple has six children from 2 months to 19 years of age. They have two *machambas* in the rainfed area that barely produce enough for consumption. In addition, the husband makes and repairs agricultural tools and doors made out of bamboo – for which there is limited requests and which pays poorly. The children go to school "sometimes", with the exception of the oldest boy who has always been interested and has received support to start 8<sup>th</sup> Grade in Metangula. The husband claims his family has always been poor, and underlines this by saying that they "never had the means to leave Meluluca" even in times of war when most people did so. He has no relatives left. The wife's father died in the civil war ('guerra familiar'), her mother from malaria and all her three brothers are also dead. The one person they rely on in times of crisis is the wife's uncle (the brother of her diseased mother), who lives close by.

**Family 2 (Usuwedwa II).** The household consists of a single mother, one of her two children and the child of an older sister who lives permanently with her. The single mother's oldest daughter is 15, has a child and just moved in with a man in the neighbourhood. The house where Usuwedwa lives is made of burnt blocks of clay (*tijolo queimado*), has four rooms and a fenced back-yard. In this case, however, the dwelling is a poor indicator of poverty and well-being: Usuwedwa is taking care of the dwelling for a younger brother who has just married and moved to his wife's place in Metangula, and Usuwedwa's real dwelling is a small shack in the yard. She has no contact with the fathers of her children, and never received any type of support (one of the father's is what she describes as a 'drunkard'). She has never gone to school, and her children stopped studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade 'as there was no money'. She has no *machamba* and makes a living by selling small *bolinhos* for 1 MTn a piece, has five

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<sup>13</sup> As is our experience from other parts of Mozambique, people in the focus groups readily identify households and the households identified do not mind – with the partial exception of the best-off households where people fear the identification may put them in discredit or provoke witchcraft or sorcery (*uffiti*). For the sake of anonymity, only fictive names will be used and each family is located in another village than where it actually lives. None of the households are represented in the photos included in this report.

chickens and two ducks, and gets fish in return when she 'rents' out the small shack where she used to live to fishermen.

**Family 3 (Chilecua).** The household lives in Lussefa, and consists of a young girl of approximately 15 years (she does not know how old she is), a child of 3 months (her first child died when it was three months) and a husband who is usually out travelling 'dancing and playing drums' (as he was when we met the household). They married traditionally in the mosque. Their dwelling is small and in poor conditions. Close by Chilecua lives her mother, who has three children with three different men. She has never received support from any of them. Also her grandmother lives close by. Her husband divorced her '*many years ago*', and she has seen five of her seven children die. The three households live separately and claim they do not 'eat from the same pot' as they do not have anything to share. Neither do they have *machambas*. According to Chilecuas's mother the *rainha* does not want to give them any, but according to her mother again she does not want to work. The main source of income for all of the women seems to be from *ganho-ganho*, primarily by helping out with small chores in the houses of others for which they receive pay either in cash or kind.

**Family 4 (Maciquine).** 'Maciquine' lives alone with a heavily handicapped boy of around eight years of age. Their one-room dwelling is nearly falling apart, and the grass roof has large holes in it. She has a total of five children, with the other four being married and living elsewhere in Meluluca. Her fortunes changed in 2009, when her husband died and she lost her main source of support. The dwelling where she used to live was taken over by her oldest son and his family, and she moved closer to her oldest brother's oldest son – who she realised was the only one who could help her as her own children "are all poor". While 'Maciquine' has access to a *machamba*, she does not really produce as she cannot leave her son alone. Her main source of income is a few chickens, and she makes mats (*esteiras*) when she can get hold of the material. When 'Maciquine' has real difficulties she turns to her nephew (*sobrinho*) for help. Her neighbours, she says, can only afford to give "moral support".

**Family 5 (Ukalama).** The household consists of two elders living in a poor one-room dwelling, and they have a small *machamba* as their main source of subsistence and income. Their field is far away, and as they are old they do not have the strength to work much. They only produce *mandioca*, which requires the least work and care – even if they are aware that it is not a very nutritious crop. In addition to themselves, they also have the *de facto* responsibility for several grandchildren who come to stay with them for longer or shorter periods of time. Their four children are all poor and largely in the same situation as their parents. Two live with their families in Metangula and two in Meluluca, and they tend to send their children to Meluluca when things (or their children...) become difficult. One granddaughter was present the day we visited the family, saying she wanted to stay 'to help out' and because it was nice to stay with the grandmother (*avo*). Their access to food improves sometimes with the help of the wife's oldest brother's oldest son who lives in Metangula: He has given them a fishing net that is used by others, and which gives the rights to a part of the catch.

**Family 6 (Odjifunila).** The husband is 46 years old, lives in Nchepa/Ngala, and has two wives and a total of 15 children. With his first wife he lives in a compound with two dwellings and an additional one under construction. His second wife – with whom he lives every second week – has a similar living arrangement. Odjifunila reached 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, and claims he grew up under poor conditions moving between Meluluca and Malawi where he started out fishing with his uncle. Returning to Meluluca after the 'family war' he worked hard in his *machambas* where he produced *mandioca* as well as 'fine maize (*mahele*)', and he ended up being able to start selling fish (and marrying a second wife). His business received a boost in 2008 when he joined an association and managed funding from the 7 million scheme of 8.000 Mtn, which he used to expand his business. In 2010 his first wife also got involved in commercialisation of fish – again with a loan from the 7 million scheme. Odjifunila sends all his children to school in Meluluca or Metangula, with the oldest from the first wife attending

the Pedagogic University in Lichinga. Odjifunila has a large extended family, with a mother and four married sisters living nearby. He also has married brothers, but they live further away in the compounds of their wives. Odjifunila claims he has close contact with his relatives, but also emphasises that he is independent and manages on his own.

**Family 7 (Opata).** ‘Opata’ left, as so many in Meluluca, for Malawi at long and regular intervals during the two wars. He also got married in Malawi. Returning in 1995, he started out producing tobacco which gave sufficient income to start other small businesses. One was to sell dried fish and the other sarongs or *capulanas* - in both cases using his contacts in Malawi. The business went well, and Opata eventually managed to invest in larger boats and cattle. He currently has a total of five motorised boats, each with crews of between 3 and 12 people depending on the type of fishing. He also has over 30 heads of cattle and 15 goats. Until he received a contribution from the 7 million scheme in 2011, he claims he was all ‘self-made’. His economic success has also had social implications: He has expanded his family and has a total of four wives and 20 children between 23 years and one month of age. Opata is still seeking to expand his business, and his plan is to buy a car and start with transportation.

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



Photo: Inge Tvedten

### 3. SOCIAL RELATIONS OF POVERTY

As accounted for elsewhere (ORGUT 2011a), we see poverty as the outcome of historical and structural forces representing opportunities and constraints to which people have to relate the best they can, as well as the population's own practises of social relations and cultural constructions. The poorest, we have postulated, are more susceptible to structural oppression and have fewer alternative options for their coping strategies than the better-off have.

#### 3.1 Family and Household Organisation

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

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

**Marriage** is by far the most common form of household organisation in Meluluca, and according to our Baseline Study encompasses 83 percent of the domestic units. Traditionally the husband is expected to move to the homestead of the wife ('uxorilocality'), and their children become the 'property' of her family. Dowry or *lobolo* – which in patrilineal contexts is a way for the husband and his family to 'compensate' the family of the bride for taking her away – does not have any customary basis in Meluluca. The Muslim *ndoa* does not have the same implication, and involves only small sums of money. Likewise, separation or divorce has been relatively easy to obtain for women, who could continue to live with their own family while the husband had to leave.

People still present this as the 'ideal', but acknowledge that it is becoming increasingly common that the wife moves to the homestead of the husband and that the children belong to the husband's family. Some men told us that 'moving to the wife's family is embarrassing and 'makes us small'. They also argued that their control of their household has increased since the economic developments following the road, as men now have money to assert themselves and take better care of their family. The large proportion of married units in Meluluca (separating it from other parts of Niassa including Majune and Cuamba) is probably a combined outcome of social sanctions against 'living together relationships' (that organise only six percent of the households); the prevalence of polygamy (see below); and the ease with which marriage is organised in Muslim communities.



**Polygamy** has roots in the matrilineal system, but seems to have become more common and ingrained in the culture with Islam. According to the Baseline Survey, as many as 40 percent of the households in Meluluca consist of more than one spouse. Having several wives was traditionally seen as a sign of wealth and influence, and made it possible to cultivate more *machambas*. Having several wives was the goal of most men (including young boys) we talked with in Meluluca, but polygamy still seems to be linked to having a reasonable economic situation.<sup>14</sup> This may be related to the importance of Islam, with the *Koran* emphasising the obligation of men to support all the wives economically. But women we discussed with also insisted that should they be one of several wives, the man had to be able to take good care of them. According to one older man's words in Nyanja, "*wamuna amitala ali ngati boma*" or "a polygamous man is like head of government".

The proportion of **female headed households** is unusually small in Meluluca, at 12 percent. Seven percent are women who are separated or divorced, four percent of widows and only one percent consists of single mothers – all according to the Baseline Survey.<sup>15</sup> As noted above the matrilineal system makes separation and divorce relatively easy. While men will usually be the ones taking the initiative, Islam also gives women the right to formally divorce men if they do not take proper care of their wives and children economically and in cases of the use of violence. The economic situation of the divorcee or widow will depend on whether she has extended family members to rely on or not. Men rarely support the women and children they have left, except when they take children along with them. Particularly older women who are divorced are easily isolated and in a difficult situation, as their own families often have difficulties taking in and feed a 'non-productive' older member – even though this violates the traditional responsibility of taking care of older family members.

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

### 3.2 Social Networks and Coping Strategies

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

<sup>14</sup> In other areas of Mozambique where we have worked, polygamy was also widespread among the poor but often without the man being in a position to take care of the household units which made them *de facto* female headed households (see eg. Tvedten et al. 2009).

<sup>15</sup> We did not record any cases of single households consisting of separated, divorced or widowed men. One reason may be that men die earlier than women ('homens morrem de pressa' as one put it), and another may be that men are more easily taken into their extended family household.

### The Poor

Perhaps the most telling expression of the 'word view' and perspective of the poor (i.e. the 'Usowedwa', the 'Chilecua', the 'Maciquine' and the 'Ukalama') is from a lady in Meluluca who stated: "Poor people do not ask questions. We are asked" (*mphawi safuncha angofunchidwa*). During our initial contacts with the poor Focus Households and others in the same situation, we asked what their plans were for the future. With only a couple of exceptions, the very poorest households consistently responded "[W]e have no plans" – in some cases followed by statements implying '[I]t is no use'. The rather fatalist perceptions of the options for improving their lives is the outcome of two processes: On the one hand, such households have to focus all their efforts and attention on the daily struggle of getting enough to eat and get money for necessary expenses, and simply have no time and strength to think about and invest in a better future – reminiscent of what some have called a 'culture of poverty'. On the other hand, many of the poor simply do not know how to improve their situation. In line with this, fishing is seen as the main potential source of income even though people know well that for a normal fisherman the pay is minimal and the options for accumulating enough money to invest in for example a boat or canoe and net are nearly non-existent.<sup>16</sup>

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

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

We hardly met any poor households who counted on the State to improve their situation. Contributions such as social protection measures (cash transfers, work schemes etc.) and the '7 million scheme' were usually talked about as if being for the better-off or for people with the right connections (sometimes with a direct reference to 'the Party'). According to a community leader, most people in Meluluca do not look upon the State as having any *obligations* to support the poor as households and individuals. Neither did we hear any explicit expectations in terms NGOs or other civil society organisations – probably because

<sup>16</sup> As we shall return to in more detail in our 2012 Report on agriculture/fisheries and other productive sectors, fishing is done on the bases of an elaborate system of distribution between the boat and net-owners and the 'workers' or 'marinheiros' where the latter receive a small share of the total.

their experience with such institutions is so limited. People do, as we shall see, look to the State for improvements in education, health, water, electricity etc., but this seems to be linked to community rather than their own private well-being.

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

*"Umpahawi siulingana"*

(Poverty is never equal)

*Nyanja Proverb*

### *The Better-Off*

The better-off (i.e. the Odjifunila and Opata) are generally characterised by having more alternative options both economically and socially than the poor. Households of this type tend to be involved in several alternative sources of income, they have often lived in Malawi or travelled widely in Niassa, and they seem to have plans for the future – both for themselves or their children. An additional characteristic of the better-off households is that they can fill social relationships with the extended family and others with material content. Outstanding claims connect people, and represent an important form of social security should there be sudden needs.

At the same time, few families seem to have a long history of being 'rich'. Prior to 2008 and the establishment of the road, there were simply very few possibilities of accumulating wealth in a context where it was difficult to take produce to markets and find buyers. The 'odjifunila' and 'opata' households we met may have had a good start in terms of ownership of land, canoes for fishing etc., but their conditions have improved rapidly after 2008 as they were able to exploit the improved marketing options. Another common denominator seems to be that they have received external economic support at some stage – either from relatives or

*"Siungapate wakhumata"*

(Nothing will happen if you keep your arms crossed)

*Nyanja Proverb*

from the '7 million scheme' that has helped them progress. In their own words, they have 'worked harder' than their poorer counterparts – as indicated by the statement of a successful *comerciante* who said "you have to work to earn [money]" (*"Tem que trabalhar para ganhar"*).

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

While there is a clear development towards a class of 'better-off' (*olemela*) and increasing inequalities in Meluluca, even the best-off may be vulnerable to large changes in their situation. No-one in Meluluca base their economic position on permanent employment and

income, and agriculture as well as fishing may see dramatic fluctuations in terms of productivity from season to season. Also for the better-off, we were struck by the limited variations in terms of sources of employment and income: Practically all are involved in agriculture, fishing or trade, and we met very few people with future plans that involved employment or other more 'secure' professions. Their main strategy for further economic and social development primarily seems to involve external support or cooperation, either with other 'comerciantes' or with State contributions such as the '7 million' scheme.

### 3.3 Gender Relations

Walking around in Meluluca, there are scenes of men and women living in apparently 'separate worlds' by working and talking in groups of other men and women only. Fishing activities on the beach are clearly the domain of men; domestic chores such as washing and fetching water are the domain of women; and agriculture is – we hear – clearly divided into male- and female tasks. In an apparent defiance of gender divisions, however, small-scale commercial activities is done by both men and women on what seem like equal terms which is not very common in northern Mozambique.

**Figure 7. Women in Market**



Photo: Inge Tvedten

We have already shown how the socio-cultural context of Meluluca, with its matrilineal kinship system and Islam as a religion, defines a set of parameters for the relations between men and women. In very general terms, matrilineality does not give women power and influence per se but it *does* define their own family as more important than that of their husband – which has implications for their options to make choices. Islam on its part gives men the responsibility to feed and care for their families, and also defines a set of obligations for women in their relation to men – including the responsibility to be obedient. These values are instilled in children throughout their upbringing,

including their participation in the Islamic school (*madrassa*) and more special occasions such as initiation rites.

Households headed by women – which is foreign both to matrilineality and Islam as 'ideologies' – seem to be in a particularly difficult situation. Preliminary impressions after the 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check confirm that for women to head a household comes with a number of costs. One is the stigma of not having a husband, which tends to define women as 'lose' or 'unmarriageable'. A second is the implications of not having a man who can help out with key 'male' tasks particularly in agriculture. And a third is the constraints set on the freedom of movement by having the sole responsibility for taking care of children. In line with this the majority of such women have been forced into such a position as the father of their children does not take on any responsibility, through separation or divorce or by becoming a widow.<sup>17</sup> According to our Baseline Study, female headed households in Meluluca are generally poorer than male-headed households in terms of income and expenditure as well as assets.

Still based on first impressions, the position of women within male-headed households varies considerably. Visiting compounds, we were often met by both men and women. While the

<sup>17</sup> This is, as we have shown in studies from other parts of Mozambique, not necessarily so: In urban areas, there seems to be a tendency for women to prefer to stay alone and care for their children particularly in cases where the man does not contribute to the household and is seen as a 'burden' (see Paulo et.al. 2007 and 2010).



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

It is too early to have qualified opinions about the wider network of men and women outside the domestic domain. However, women in Meluluca seem primarily to interact with friends and neighbours in their daily activities, while men tend to meet in more special arenas such as around

*“Sindilomula pakuti ndili wankazi”*

(We have no influence as woman)

*Poor Nyanja woman complaining*

fishing activities and in the Mosque. The Baseline Study also indicates that relations with formal and informal institutions is in the hands of the male head of household, and that poor single women are less likely to contact such institutions than poor men.

## 4. SUMMING UP

This 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check has painted a fairly broad picture of the structural constraints and socio-cultural conditions in Meluluca – and is primarily meant to represent a ‘baseline’ upon which subsequent Reality Checks are to be based. However, the preliminary information we have does indicate some key issues regarding the relevance of formal and informal institutions and the dynamics of poverty and well-being in.

### 4.1 Meluluca as Community

- Meluluca is located in the southern part of the District of Lago, and has traditionally been a relatively isolated community depending on subsistence agriculture and fishing.
- The community is currently in a process of considerable change, as a result of the improved road built from the District capital Metangula in 2008.
- This has not only set in motion enhanced economic possibilities, but also processes of increasing inequalities between the better-off and the poor.
- In addition to agriculture and fishing, trade and commerce is expanding. With increased access to money, there is also a basis for alternative informal occupations.
- Lack of electricity, poor health facilities and un-clean water are seen as main challenges in the community. People largely hold the provincial and district governments responsible for improving the situation.
- Traditional structures in the form of traditional authorities, a matrilineal kinship system and Islam are still very much intact, and have a strong influence on the organisation of the community as well as on individual families and households.
- The large majority of households consist of a formally married couple, children and grandchildren; four out of ten households are polygamous, and the proportion of female headed households is unusually low.

### 4.2 Formal and Informal Institutions

- While Meluluca has become ‘incorporated’ into State structures by being declared an Administrative Post in 2008, it is still characterised by having relatively weak or absent public institutions.
- The main challenges are in the areas of education (where most children only have access to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade and where absenteeism seems higher than official data imply) and in health (where availability and quality of health institutions seem exceptionally low).
- At the same time, traditional structures and authorities are active and influential in matters related to the well-being of the communities as well as households and individuals.
- The state has related to this by partly incorporating the traditional institutions into their areas of responsibilities, resulting in a degree of ‘mutual dependence’.
- For the poor, access to public institutions is limited by poverty and social isolation and they tend to relate to traditional institutions and their extended family to establish vital social relationships and receive support at times of crisis.
- The better-off have easier access to public institutions in Meluluca as well as in the district capital Metangula, and are in a position to exploit the services and options available including access to the District Development Fund.

### 4.3 Social Mobility

- The population in Meluluca distinguishes between four levels of poverty (i.e. ‘Usowedwa’, the ‘Chilecua’, the ‘Maciquine’ and the ‘Ukalama’) and three levels of well-being (i.e. ‘Odjifunila’, ‘Opata’ and ‘Olemela’).

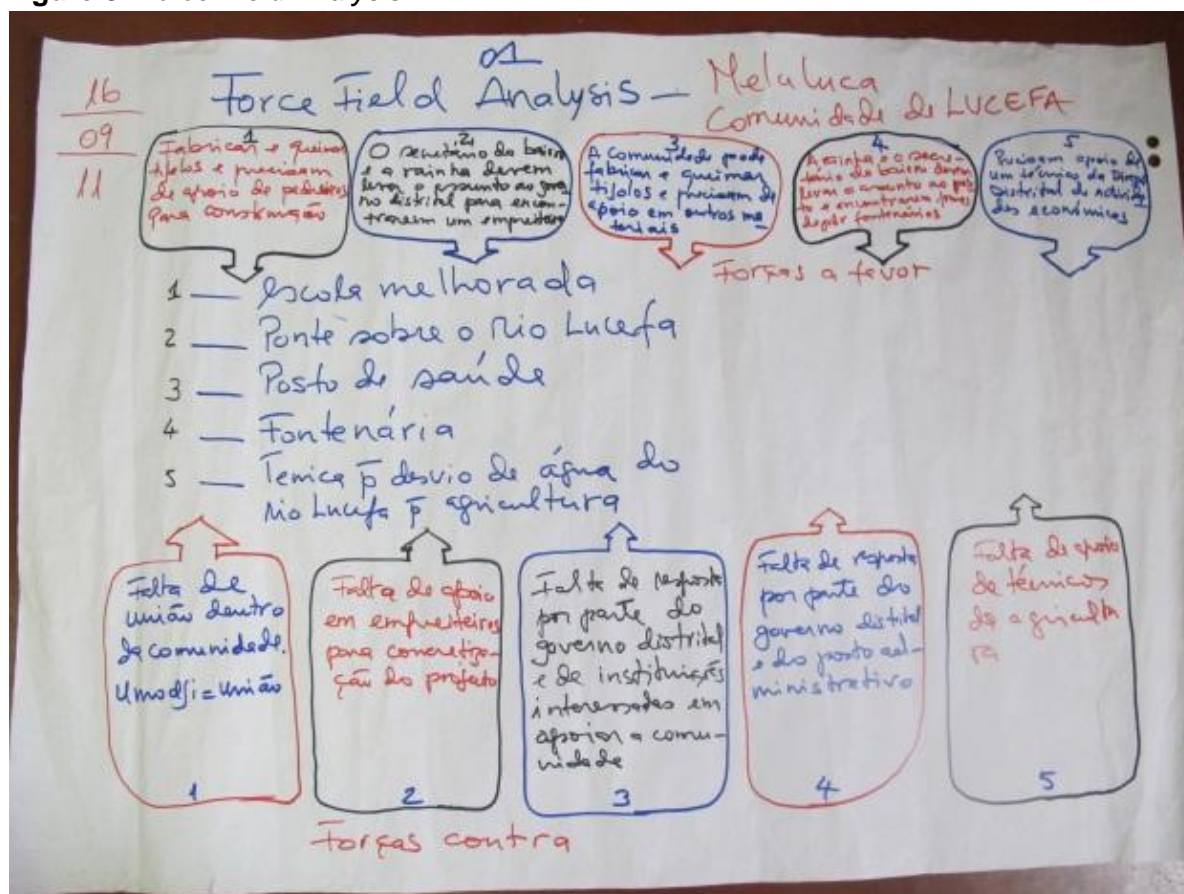
- Some families have been poor for generations, and have never managed to establish the necessary social relationships and acquire the necessary resources for upward social mobility. These households depend on external support to survive, either from their extended family, from local systems of redistribution and support, or from public systems of social protection.
- Other poor families have seen their fortunes change rapidly as a result of sudden shocks, such as loss of income earners or illness. Their challenge is to re-establish themselves as viable social units, by mobilising external social relationships and alternative sources of income. This seems to be difficult in the current socio-economic context, particularly for female-headed households that have lost their male partner.
- The better-off households have been in a position to exploit the new economic opportunities since 2008 – either because they already possessed some resources that could be expanded (such as productive *machambas* or canoes) or have had social relationships that could be mobilised to access markets and credit (including the 7 million Mt scheme).

#### 4.4 Future Prospects

To end this 1<sup>st</sup> Reality Check from Meluluca, we will present two sets of data that throw light on the perceived future challenges and prospects of the community (derived from the Venn Diagramme Exercise) and the population itself (taken from the Baseline Survey) (see ORGUT 2011f).

As seen from Figure 8, the five most important issues to be solved in the community are seen to be 1) improved educational facilities; 2) improved systems of transportation (including bridges); 3) improved health facilities; 4) improved access to clean water; and 5)

Figure 8. Force-Field Analysis



improved agricultural technologies (including systems of irrigation). The community has also listed forces for and forces against achieving these goals (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Forces for and against preferred development options**

FORCES IN FAVOUR	
1.	The community can make and burn [building] blocks, but need the support of a mason for construction of the school.
2.	The Bairro Secretary and the Queen should inform District Government about the [main] concern of the population, which is to have a bridge over River Lussefa, for them to find a constructor who can make a bridge with quality.
3.	The community can make and burn [building] blocks, but need other types of material in order to construct a Health Post.
4.	The Queen and the Bairro Secretary should approach the Administrative Post to find ways to increase the number of wells in the community.
5.	We need the support of a technician from the District Directorate of Economic and Social Services to teach us how to construct [systems of] irrigation.
FORCES CONTRA	
1.	There is a lack of unification (umodji in Nyanja) in the community.
2.	There is a lack of support from building companies to implement the project.
3.	There is a lack of responses from the District Government and other institutions that can support the community.
4.	There is a lack of the necessary responses from the District Government and the Administrative Post Falta to construct the wells.
5.	There is a lack of support from agricultural technicians.

For individual households, the main areas of *desired* change in their situation the next five years (i.e. until 2016 and the termination of the Reality Check series) is listed in Table 8. We will follow the extent to which the community of Meluluca and the families living there manage to fulfil their dreams and expectations in follow-up Reality Checks the coming four years (2012 to 2015).

**Table 8. Main Area of Desired Change in Households**

Area of Change	Percent
Employment	25.8
Education	5.0
Health	5.0
Own production	13.3
Habitation	20.8
Assets	15.0
Other	9.2
None	5.8

Source: Baseline Survey 2011



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