



FishFORCE



CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP: ENDING THE USE OF ILLEGAL MONOFILAMENT NETS IN MALAWI AND ADVANCING REGIONAL ACTION

27-31 October 2025, Salima, Senga Bay, Malawi





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Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|-----------|--|
| BVC | Beach Village Committee |
| RVC | River Village Committee |
| FA | Fisheries Association |
| Sub-FA | Sub–Fisheries Association |
| LFMA | Local Fisheries Management Authority |
| DFO | District Fisheries Office / Officer |
| JMC | Joint Monofilament Committee / Joint Monofilament Task Force |
| TCF | Technical Committee on Fisheries (SADC) |
| DoF | Department of Fisheries |
| MRA | Malawi Revenue Authority |
| DNPW | Department of National Parks and Wildlife |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| MCSCC | Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre (of the SADC) |
| OTF | Operational Task Force (of the SADC MCSCC) |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| AWFISHNET | African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network |
| IUU | illegal, unreported and unregulated (fishing) |
| MCS | monitoring, control and surveillance |
| MF / MF | monofilament nets |
| HS | Harmonised System (Customs Classification Code) |
| CPF | Community Police Forum |
| CID | Criminal Investigation Department |
| SIF | Stop Illegal Fishing |
| MT | Metric Tonnes |
| USD | United States Dollar |

1 Introduction

Monofilament and mosquito nets are materials that are prohibited for fishing in Malawi due to their destructive impact on fish stocks. Despite national bans and awareness campaigns, their use remains widespread in Lake Malawi, Lake Malombe, Lake Chilwa, and river systems such as the Shire River. Efforts by the Department of Fisheries, Beach Village Committees (BVCs), and partners have yielded some results, but progress has been constrained by resource limitations, low fisher awareness, and the continued accessibility of illegal nets. The challenge extends beyond Malawi. The use and distribution of monofilament nets is a regional problem that is growing across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in both marine and inland fisheries.

Smuggling of monofilament nets across land borders undermines fisheries management exasperates the growing use of monofilament nets and highlights the need for new approaches to the management of this illegal fishing gear. Addressing the challenge of monofilament nets requires collective regional action, particularly to harmonise legislation, strengthen enforcement, and disrupt supply chains. The SADC Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre (MCSCC) is well placed to lead a coordinated policy initiative against illegal fishing nets. The SADC MCSCC was set up through the 2017 SADC Charter Establishing the MCSCC to coordinate regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in inland and marine fisheries, and to implement the 2001 SADC Protocol on Fisheries. The Protocol on Fisheries, which is rooted in the FAO Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries, was the first regional and legally binding policy to guide the sector, with the objective to promote responsible and sustainable use of living aquatic resources across Southern Africa.

Malawi has stepped forward within the MCSCC Operational Task Force (MCSCC OTF) to pilot approaches to deal with monofilament nets. This has provided an important pilot opportunity to demonstrate the urgency of the problem and the potential for region-wide solutions. In October 2025, at the third meeting of the MCSCC OTF, the Task Force supported the initiative of Malawi to take the lead on elaborating a case study on the issue, which could build momentum for a regional commitment, provide evidence to guide policy, and promote collective measures to safeguard shared fishery resources.

It is expected that this initiative will catalyse collective national and regional action against illegal monofilament nets, with the goal to support the elaboration of a national strategy and position the issue for consideration by the SADC MCSCC OTF Meeting, the SADC Technical Committee on Fisheries (TCF) and subsequently at the SADC Ministers' meeting in 2026. Tabling this issue at the SADC Ministers' meeting, which has the mandate to discuss and address regional issues related to the fisheries sector and formulate policies, strategies, and action plans to enhance food security, sustainable agriculture, and the development of fisheries and aquaculture, would bring the issue as a priority agenda for the region.

Stop Illegal Fishing (SIF), as a technical partner of the MCSCC, is partnering with the Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining of Malawi to support this initiative, with funding support from the FishFORCE Academy of Nelson Mandela University through the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a first step to implement this, a consultative workshop on "Ending the Use of Illegal Monofilament Nets in Malawi and Advancing Regional Action" was organised on 27-28 October 2025.

Following the workshop and field work, SIF will work together with the Department of Fisheries to:

- Draft and finalise a brief **national strategy** that will guide Malawi's next steps in tackling illegal monofilament nets and inform regional discussions.
- Prepare a Malawi **case study**, capturing national experience, lessons, and policy options. This will be presented at the next SADC Operational Task Force meeting as an input to ongoing regional discussions and policy processes.

2 Welcome and opening

The workshop was attended by 40 participants from five districts bordering Lake Malawi (Karonga, Nkhatakota, Nkhata Bay, Salima and Mangochi) as well as the economic and administrative capitals Lilongwe and Blantyre. The participants represented all important stakeholder groups, including fisheries officers, research, the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA), the Ministry of Trade, the Police, the Commercial Fishers Association of Malawi, local authorities, Joint Monofilament Committees (JMCs) from the different districts, the NGO Ripple Africa and the media.

The full list of participants is available in the annexes.

Picture 1: Group photo



In his welcome remarks, the Director of Fisheries, Dr. Hastings Zidana highlighted the importance of the fisheries sector to the country's socio-economic development as it ensures food security by supplying about 70% of the animal protein, job creation and overall economic growth. Owing to these benefits, the Director of Fisheries encouraged the stakeholders to work together in finding workable solutions to sustain the sector through the elimination of illegal monofilament nets, which have proved to be destructive. He stated the commitment of the Department of Fisheries to take up the issue to the SADC Committee of Ministers responsible for fisheries.

Picture 2: Dr. Hastings Zidana, Director of Fisheries



Concurring with the Director of Fisheries, Senior Deputy Director of Fisheries, Dr. Maxon Ngochera voiced the commitment of Malawi towards ending illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the SADC region. He emphasised that these illegal monofilament nets are non-biodegradable, non-selective, and when lost in water, continue to trap fish, a phenomenon referred to as "ghost fishing". For this reason, monofilament nets are banned in Malawi regardless of the mesh sizes. Dr. Ngochera shared results of 2024's frame survey, which found that at least 75,000 of 88,000 gillnets identified during the survey (representing 85 percent) were made of monofilament material. As those nets are banned, the fishers using them operate without licenses throughout all districts, causing the country to lose a significant amount of revenues in terms of licence fees.

Speaking on behalf of Stop Illegal Fishing (SIF), Mr. Per Erik Bergh commended the Department of Fisheries for making strong efforts to eliminate illegal fishing gears through the complete ban as well as increasing the awareness of their destructive nature. He welcomed the presence of a wide range of key actors to this workshop. He emphasised that the problem goes beyond Malawi, indicated that Namibia confiscated of 3,000 illegal nets made of monofilament in October 2025.

The District Commissioner for Salima District, Mr. James Mwenda commended the strong collaboration by the various stakeholders aimed at finding solutions that would help to completely eradicate the use of illegal monofilament nets in Malawi's water bodies. He also reminded the stakeholders of their important role to generate recommendations that could feed into a national strategy. He lamented the dwindling of fish species of economic importance such as Chambo, which the country is known for, attributing the decline to irresponsible fishing practices including the use of illegal monofilament nets.

Picture 3: Mr. James Mwenda, District Commissioner for Salima District



This workshop purpose was to:

- **Document and share local experiences** – capture fisheries district-level experiences, challenges, and strategies from Malawi in addressing the illegal use of monofilament nets.
- **Build awareness** – strengthen national awareness about the issues, challenges and solutions to support implementation of a national strategy.
- **Analyse cross-border supply chains** – identify and map regional linkages and trade routes driving the availability and use of illegal nets in Malawi.
- **Review and compile best practices** – assess legislative frameworks and enforcement approaches in Malawi and neighbouring countries to identify effective models; and
- **Gather elements to include in a national strategy** – generate recommendations to support a national strategy for combating illegal monofilament nets in Malawi.



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3 **Illegal fishing practices in Lake Malawi**

Salim M'balaka, from the Research section of the Capture Fisheries Division, made a presentation on the impact of illegal fishing gears in Lake Malawi. He started by highlighting the socio-economic importance of fisheries in Lake Malawi, and for the whole country, based on the result of 2024's frame survey. The small-scale fishing industry directly employs 82,000 people as fishers. Nationally, the industry employs another 1,500,000 people in the fisheries value chain as traders, processors, boat builders, net menders, engine repairs, etc. Yet, female involvement remains low (2 percent) in direct fishing activities.

One of the commonly reported types of IUU fishing in all waterbodies is the use of illegal fishing nets, in particular gillnets made of monofilament net. Monofilament is a type of fishing net made from a single strand of nylon or plastic filament. Those nets are invisible underwater, making them highly effective at catching fish. They are used as fixed gillnets, drifting gillnets, gillnet hauling from the beach (witnessed in Nkhota Kota), and can also be integrated in chilimira nets (open-water seine nets to target mostly Utaka and Usipa).

He highlighted drivers of the use of monofilament nets, including:

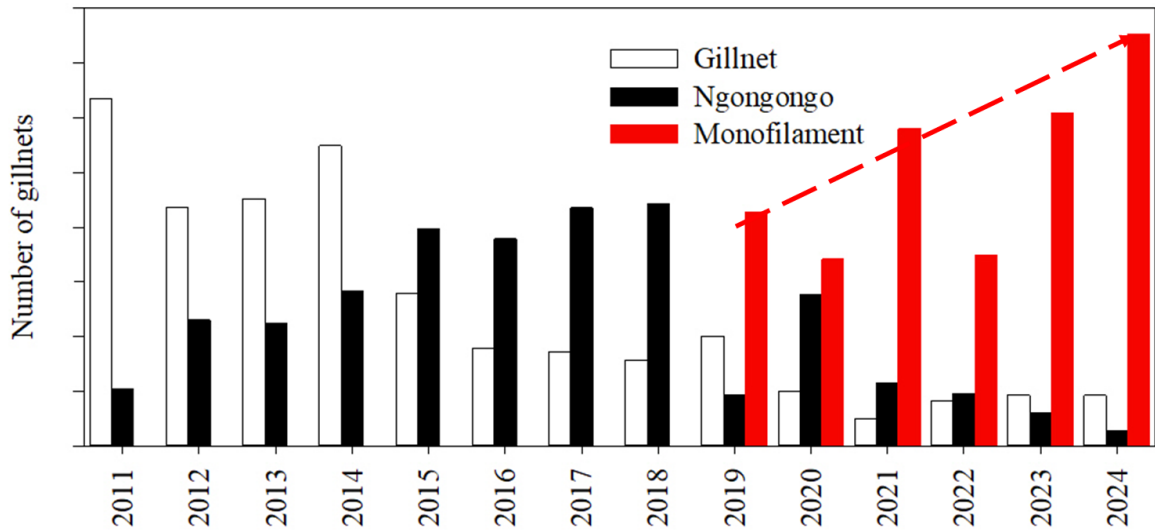
- weak governance and enforcement
- weak MCS
- willingness to maximise profit
- lack of alternative livelihoods
- lack of awareness and education, and
- overfishing and depleted fish stocks (which is both a driver and a consequence of the use of those nets)

The research has evidenced serious impacts of monofilament net use, including:

- 'ghost fishing' leading to death and injury to the fish
- over-exploitation of fish stocks due to efficiency
- fish biodiversity loss
- water and land pollution
- increased cases of conflicts among fishers

Mr. M'balaka presented trends in terms of use of monofilaments since they first appeared in Malawi in 2017, as well as multifilament under-mesh size gillnets (Ngongongo), compared to the use of legal gillnets. Since 2019, the use of monofilament nets has been increasing at a high rate, whilst the use of Ngongongo and legal gillnets has kept decreasing, reaching very low levels today (see Figure 1). In 2024, the frame survey identified that 75,000 of the 88,000 units of gillnets counted during the survey were made of monofilament material (with 1 Unit=100m), or 85 percent of all gillnets. This represents at least 7,500 kilometers of monofilament nets used in Malawi's waterbodies, without accounting for the nets that might have not been counted in the frame survey.

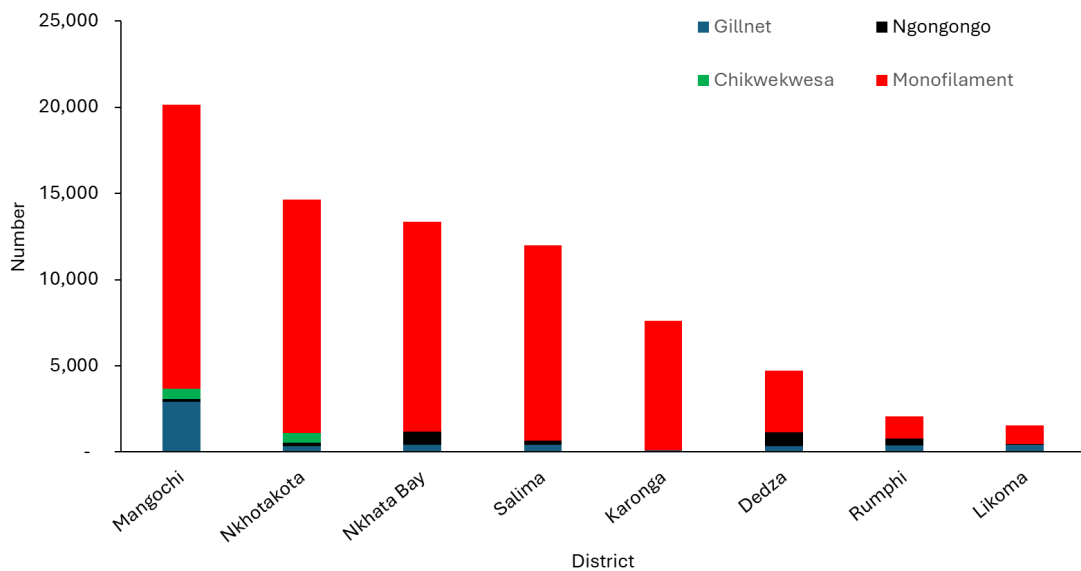
Figure 1. Trend for use of gillnets in Malawi



Source: 2024 Frame survey, Department of Fisheries

Mr. M’balaka also presented results of the survey per district bordering Lake Malawi, showing that Mangochi was the district with the highest number of monofilament nets identified.

Figure 2. Trend for use of monofilament nets in districts bordering Lake Malawi



Source: 2024 Frame survey, Department of Fisheries

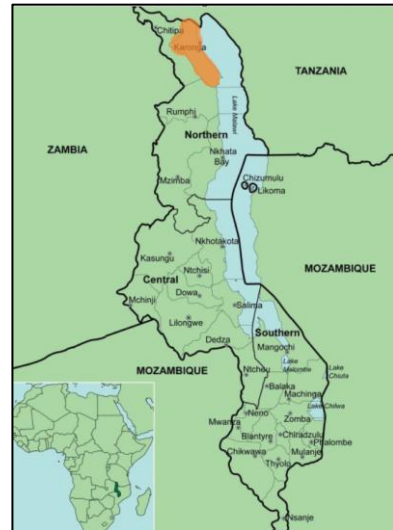
4 District overview of the status of monofilament nets

4.1 Karonga

In terms of fisheries, Karonga district covers an area from Chitimba river in the area of traditional authorities Wasambo in the South to Songwe River in the area of traditional authority Kilupula in the North. It has six strata: Chitimba, Chilumba, Nyungwe, Mlare, Boma and Kaporo.

4.1.1 Some facts about the fisheries

- 64 BVCs, 12 river village committees (RVCs), 5 sub-fisheries associations at traditional authority level (Sub-FAs) and 1 district fisheries association
- Number of fishers (2024 Frame survey): 8,292, including 117 females (1.14 percent)
- Major landing sites on Lake Malawi: Kaporo, Chipamila, Ngala, Chilumba, Kambwe, Nyungwe



4.1.2 Actions conducted in Karonga against monofilament nets

- establishment of a Joint Monofilament Task Force in May 2024, including Traditional Authority, Malawi Defence Force (MDF), police, the fisheries association, forestry, environment, judiciary, Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA), the media (Zodiac), the district information officer, community police and representatives of net sellers. The role of the Task Force is to
 - strengthen enforcement and compliance.
 - support community participation in eradication of monofilaments.
 - mobilise resources to ensure effective and consistent eradication of monofilaments.
- sensitisation events with different stakeholders across the district
- confiscation of monofilament nets

4.1.3 Challenges

The district experiences several challenges, including:

- low levels of commitment from BVCs
- increased levels of monofilament use
- use of under meshed sized gillnets
- lack of alternative incomes for most fishing communities, which makes it difficult to raise awareness about conservation and sustainability
- limited resources to support monofilament taskforce
- hostility in most fishing areas

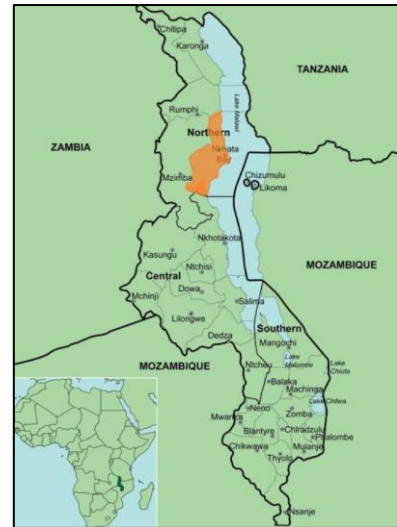
4.2 Nkhata Bay

4.2.1 Some facts about the fisheries

- Fisheries in the district contribute at least 30 percent to the total national production. Fishing is mostly conducted by artisanal fishers, with 10,103 fishers.
- Monofilament nets in the district increased from 367 in 2017 to 12,183 in 2025, whilst the use of other nets decreased.

4.2.2 Actions conducted in Nkhata Bay against monofilament nets

- awareness campaigns
- stakeholder engagement meetings, including
 - stakeholder review meetings on fisheries court cases in the district council chamber, and
 - a meeting to sensitise the District Commissioner, the Department of Agricultural Extension and Natural Resources (DAENR), Prosecutors, Investigators, Magistrates on Fisheries Act 1997.
- joint water and land patrols
- roadblocks
- court proceedings, and
- disposal of confiscated items, involving burning operations.



Ten arrests involving use of fishing gear made of monofilament. Fines range from 70,000 (40 USD) to 300,000 kwacha (175 USD). Sentences also include several months of imprisonment with hard labour (IHL), from 12 to 18 months. It is, however, estimated that those fines are not deterrent enough.

4.2.3 Challenges

The district experiences several challenges, including:

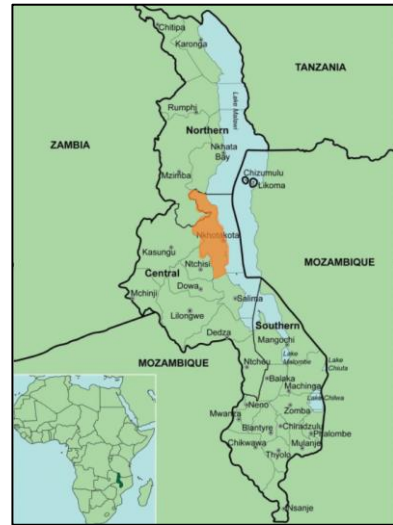
- inadequate funding
- lack of proper seaworthy patrol boat
- fines in court that are not deterrent enough
- hostile fishing community
- lack of proper regalia for MCS Inspectors
- lack of MCS equipment

4.3 Nkhotakota

Nkhotakota is divided into strata led by traditional authorities, which include a number of Beach Village Committees (BVCs). Chilwa (14), Chia Lagoon (10), Linga/Sani (18), Liwalazi (16), Ngala (11), for a total of 69 BVCs. However, only 20 percent of those BVCs are active.

4.3.1 Some facts about the fisheries

- Number of gear owners: 1,769 (1,736 male; 33 female)
- Number of crew members: 9,023 (8,768 male; 255 female)
- Number of fishing crafts: boats with engine (B+E): 557, Boat without engine (B-E): 135, Planked canoes: 846, Dugout canoes: 1,320
- Number of gillnets: legal gillnets: 348, **Monofilaments: 13,523**, Ngongongo: 176, Chikwekwesa: 179
- Fishing is conducted nearshore and offshore.
- 14 sanctuaries have been established.



4.3.2 Actions conducted in Nkhotakota against monofilament nets

- awareness campaigns (via radio and on-site)
- establishment of a joint monofilament committee (JMC)
- patrols and enforcement, which resulted in:
 - 63,100+ illegal units confiscated
 - 10+ court cases taken forward
 - 600+ monofilament nets burnt in 2024
- participatory fisheries management, including signature of management agreements between the Department of Fisheries and the local Sub-FAs
- licensing
- sanctuaries

Nkhotakota received the support from Ripple Africa to conduct their activities.

4.3.3 Challenges

The district experiences several challenges, including

- the high number of fishers with monofilament nets
- illegal fishers outnumber fisheries officers
- inadequate monthly funding
- lack of capacity among extension workers
- political interference
- high cases of non-compliance
- corruption among chiefs, extension workers and stakeholders
- research to understand what drives non-compliance.

4.4 Salima

The Fishing industry is one of the major sources of employment and income in the district.

4.4.1 Some facts about the fisheries

- 58 fish landing sites, which span within 6 Traditional Authorities
- 94 active BVCs, 20 RVCs and 9 Sub-FAs
- 47 sanctuaries
- Fish catches are declining, whilst unsustainable fishing methods and use of illegal fishing gears are increasing. This is also linked to effects of climate change (e.g., strong winds, siltation) on the fisheries.
- 5,869 people employed in the fisheries, including:
 - Artisanal fishers (gear owners and crew): 5,844
 - Trawl operators (stern and pair trawlers): 20
 - Aquarists (ornamental fish traders): 5
- Monofilament gillnets are the most used type of gillnet in the district (11,329, or 95 percent)

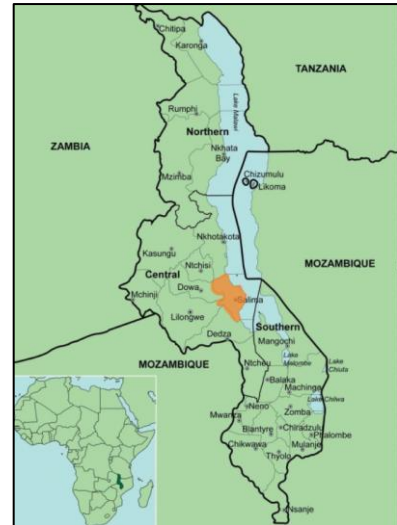
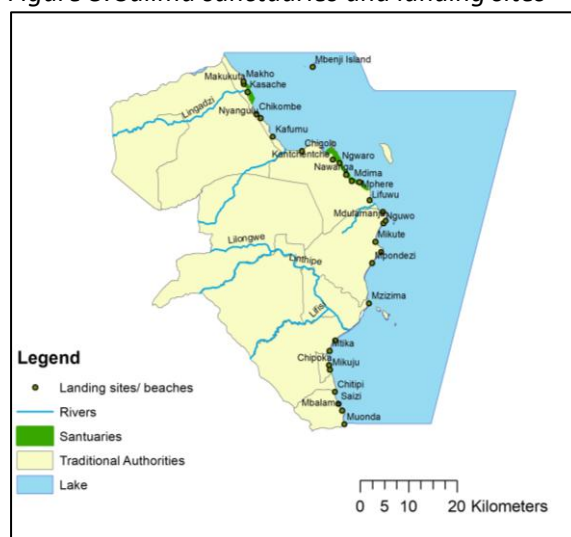


Figure 3. Salima sanctuaries and landing sites



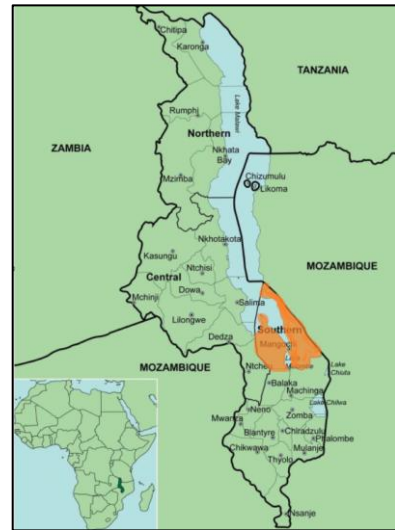
4.4.2 Actions conducted in Salima against monofilament nets

- awareness meetings to local leaders and the fishing communities, including campaigns on illegal fishing activities and materials
- empowering BVCs and Sub-FAs to confiscate monofilament nets
- collaboration with other institutions such as trade, MRA, Police and Judiciary in enforcement
- enforcement of fisheries regulations and confiscation of illegal fishing materials, including monofilament from fishers and traders
- sanctions

4.5 Mangochi

4.5.1 Some facts about the fisheries

- Number of people employed in fisheries (2024 frame survey)
 - 20,039 directly employed
 - 40,000 with ancillary roles
 - 34 commercial fishers
 - Fishing activities dominated by men, and processing by women
- Promotion of community-based fisheries management, with 163 BVCS, 9 Sub-FAs, 2 FAs
- Most used fishing gears are monofilaments, followed by gillnets and longline
- The district has the objective to increase fish production to 40,000 MT by 2026
- Key programmes conducted include promotion of aquaculture, support to MCS and value chain improvements.



4.5.2 Actions conducted in Mangochi against monofilament nets

- enhancing community based MCS.
- improving value chains to improve fish quality and reduce post-harvest losses
- enhancing sector linkages
 - Irrigation
 - Disaster risk management
 - Health
-

4.5.3 Challenges

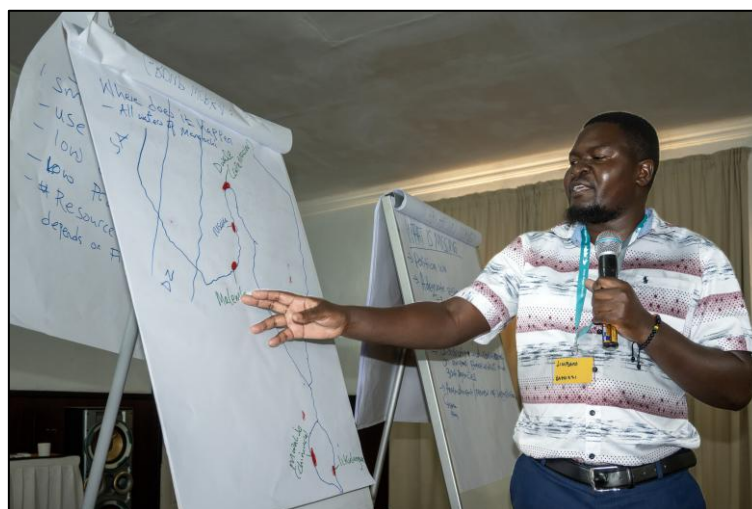
The district experiences several challenges, including

- rampant IUU fishing
- climate change-frequent storms and cyclones
- poorly developed value chains

4.6 Discussion for the district status

- **Data on monofilament nets:** Participants wanted to understand the monofilament nets catch in terms of landing quantity and species composition. More detailed information is included in the frame survey; however, it may not be straightforward information since the sector does not recognize monofilaments as legal gears hence causing limited on data collection. The data collection system is now digital, which allows better data collection.
- **Cooperation:** Because of regional character of monofilament nets, collaboration with MRA would be important. Experience of collaboration took place in Mangochi, yet it was difficult for MRA to operate in the district, primarily because of other offences like stolen vehicles of the MRA.
- **Highest intensity of challenge:** From the statistics, Mangochi is the district with the highest use of monofilament nets. This was attributed to the size of water body and the proximity with Mozambique.
- **Trade:** It was observed in Salima that monofilament nets traders changed their strategy and concentrated on the beaches as their selling points instead of shops.
- **Destruction of nets:** Disposal of monofilament nets by burning raises environmental concerns. There was a request to have MCSCC guidelines or procedures for net disposal. This would be in line with the mandate of the MCSCC to harmonise MCS procedures throughout the region. Guidelines could be developed in partnership with institutions or authority dealing with environmental protection.
- **Imports:** It was observed that there was lack of statistics in terms of imports of monofilament nets that would be shared between MRA and fisheries. It would be useful to gather intelligence on these issues, e.g., on banned gears and smuggling.
- **Holistic approach:** It was noted that because of the socio-economic context of monofilament nets, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach to the issue, also considering the drivers such as the lack of alternative livelihood and the under-developed supply chains.

Picture 4: Participant showing hotspots of use of monofilament nets in Mangochi district



5 Group work 1: understanding the monofilament net issue

Following the initial presentations, the participants divided into three groups:

- **Group 1:** Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhatakota (grouped because of low number of participants per district)
- **Group 2:** Salima
- **Group 3:** Mangochi

The objective of this group work was to go more in-depth into the issue of monofilament nets and to document the experiences and knowledge at district level. The discussions were divided into two parts:

Part 1: Understanding the issue

- who are the fishers who use monofilament nets?
- what drives the continued use of monofilament nets – affordability, availability, lack of alternatives or other reasons?
- where are they used? Everywhere or specific areas?
- what are concrete problems associated with the nets?

Part 2: Solutions implemented so far by the district

- what has worked?
- what has not worked and why?
- what is missing to implement successfully? Recommendations?

Picture 5: Introduction to Group work 1



The details of the results of the group works are presented in Table 2 and 3 below. There was a convergence in the answers of the groups, which allows to provide a general picture of the situation in Lake Malawi. Table 1 below provides a consolidation of those answers, to which aspects highlighted in the district presentations have been added.



Table 1: Consolidated picture of the monofilament issue in Lake Malawi

| Part 1: Understanding the issue | |
|---|--|
| Who are the fishers using monofilament nets? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly small-scale fishers using dugout canoes, as well as large-scale fishers targeting ornamental fish • Mostly using monofilament nets as gillnets • Mostly young male fishers (less than 35 years old) • Economically challenged fishers with low capital base, who depend on fisheries for their livelihood due to lack of alternative • In Salima <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ business community (individuals that have employed some crew members to operate their monofilament nets), and ○ working class (teachers, officers from MDF and others working in lodges who possess monofilament nets that are operated by crew members; usually individuals from other areas that have come to the lake to work. They usually do not have boats or canoes and hire boats) |
| Where does it happen? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread in all water bodies, e.g., rivers, lagoons, water reservoirs and all lakes, including in sanctuaries • Hotspots identified for all districts |
| What drives the use of the nets? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The characteristics of monofilament: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ relatively affordable ○ easily available in all districts ○ very effective in catching fish (estimated 3 times higher than multifilament) due to transparency, small mesh size and light weight which makes it drift easily and become active gear ○ requires low labour compared to multifilament, which needs to be mended. MF are just replaced when they become unusable. • Socio-economic context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poverty ○ Lack of alternative sources of livelihood • Legal challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy gaps ○ Outdated Act ○ Fines and punishment are not deterrent enough • Limited capacity for law enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of coordination amongst stakeholders ○ Inadequate resources ○ Weak local fishing management authority (LFMA) • Challenges in preventing entry of monofilament into Malawi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Porous borders ○ Use of unconventional/unchartered routes ○ Insufficient knowledge about the issue of trade and customs • Insufficient awareness about the issue |
| Concrete examples of problems associated with the nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of fish stocks • Catch of non-targeted organisms (lack of selectivity) • Very expensive to clean/retrieve, contributes to land and aquatic pollution • Contribution to ecological imbalance • Loss of revenue for not licensing fishers • Hostile fishing communities |



| Part 2: Solutions implemented | |
|---|--|
| What has worked and why? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of multiagency JMC (in all districts), whose activities have been mostly to confiscate monofilament nets from shops. Those activities have resulted in a reduction in sales of monofilament by traders. However, those sales have moved to more informal trade. Operations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spot checks operations ○ Confiscation of fishing gear • Conduct of patrols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in Salima, patrols reduced monofilament ○ frequent water patrols • Law enforcement activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arrest and prosecution of offenders ○ Confiscation of fishing gear vessels and engine ○ Disposal of the confiscated gears • Monofilament ban (2019) • Sensitisation/stakeholder engagement |
| Why measures implemented have not worked | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient stakeholder commitment to stop monofilament use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ limited stakeholder engagement ○ resistance to change and compliance with regulations ○ BVC is a solution but there are many challenges, incl. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ conflict of interest amongst BVC/local leaders – some BVC members also use those nets ▪ BVCs are a requirement as per the legislation, but there is not always the necessary commitment ▪ involvement of family members in monofilament/lack of willingness to denounce offences • Legal gaps prevent efficient law enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ outdated fisheries Act ○ Amendment of the law is still under process (including for increasing fines) • Challenges in preventing entry of monofilament into Malawi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Porous borders ○ Use of unconventional/unchartered routes ○ Insufficient knowledge about the issue by trade and customs officers ○ Hostility during interception of MF on unchartered routes • Challenges to enforce law and sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ hostility of fishers ○ issues of jumping/absconding bail – some offenders escape from the districts, making it impossible to arrest/prosecute them, and there is no formal communication amongst districts that could prevent this. ○ misperception about the fisheries department – fishers and communities think that the Department is here to arrest people and confiscate gears – they think that the Department banned monofilament nets because they do not want people to catch more fish. |
| What is missing to implement successful solutions? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will, at local, district, national and regional levels • Adequate resources to enforce the law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Human capacity (capacity building) ○ Infrastructure and equipment to conduct frequent patrols (boats, engines) ○ Use of technology (e.g., drones) • Amendment/review of the legislation |



| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide LFMA with powers to fine offenders, in liaison with MCS officers ○ Empower MRA to be able to check goods in transit ○ Increase fines and sanctions ● Measures to prevent monofilament nets from entering Malawi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitoring of unchartered routes ○ Use of technology gadgets e.g., drones for patrolling unchartered routes ○ empower MRA to be able to check goods in transit ● Setting up toll-free numbers, to give anonymous tip-offs ● Introduction of incentives for law enforcement actors e.g., risk allowances for MCS officers ● Better coordination and collaboration amongst stakeholders and government agencies ● Link Chiefs performance assessment to the efforts made (and results) to curb the presence of monofilament nets ● More mobilisation of citizens in combatting monofilament, e.g., in campaigns to avoid fish caught with monofilament, and to support evidence of impact of monofilaments, through citizen science ● Need to step up sensitisation on the issue and to develop material for awareness raising/sensitising/training (or relevant stakeholders, incl. customs and police) |
|--|--|

Table 2: Results of group work on the issue of monofilament nets, based on experience at district level

| Understanding the issue | Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota | Salima | Mangochi |
|--|--|--|--|
| Who are the fishers using monofilament nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small scale fishers ● Large-scale fishers (ornamental) ● Mostly male fishers ● Mostly youth of middle age (less than 35) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small scale fishers ● Economically challenged fishers ● Ornamental fishers ● Working class ● Business community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small-scale fishers ● Use dugout canoes ● Low capital base ● Low production per unit ● Resource poor – livelihood depends on fisheries |
| Where does it happen? Everywhere or specific areas? | <p>In all water bodies, e.g., rivers, lagoons, water reservoirs and all lakes. Mostly in NK.</p> <p>Hot spots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Karonga <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boma stratum 2. Ngala / Mlare 3. Chilumba 4. Chitimba ● NB <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kande 2. Sanga (6.3) 3. Chintheche 4. Tukombo 5. Usisya 6. Thotho | <p>Everywhere in Salima</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rivers i.e., Linthipe. ● in lakes ● in sanctuaries ● onshore ● offshore <p>Hotspots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chigumukire ● Mbenje ● Maleri ● Mabango ● Chipoka ● Kantchentche | <p>In all waters of Mangochi.</p> <p>Hotspots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ng’ombe ● Likulungwa ● Mwalija (Chimwala) ● Malembo ● Msaka ● Dwale (Cape McClear) |



| Understanding the issue | Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota | Salima | Mangochi |
|---|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NK <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liwaladzi 5.4 2. Sani 5.3 3. Ngala 5.5 4. Chilwa 5.1 5. Chia 5.2 | | |
| What drives the use of the nets? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very effective in catching fish • Cheap • Limited alternative of livelihood / poverty • Easily available • Porous borders /unconventional routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability • Availability • Efficiency • Low labour requirement • Weak enforcement • Corruption • Policy gaps • Porous borders • Knowledge gap • Non deterrent fines and punishments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable (relatively) • Efficiency – 3 times higher than multifilament • Invisible • Light – easily drifts (becomes like active gear) • Locally available – through unchartered routes • No alternatives to other sources of livelihood (coping mechanisms) • Limited enforcement |
| Concrete examples of problems associated with the nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak local fishing management authority (LFMA) to conduct enforcement • Monofilaments are highly favoured by a lot of fishers due to the effectiveness of catching fish • Poor coordination among stakeholders • Inadequate resources • Outdated legislation / fisheries Act • Porous borders and unconventional routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not environmentally friendly (not biodegradable), leads to ghost fishing • Highly contributing to decline of fish catches • Catches non-targeted organisms • Very expensive to clean/retrieve • Contributes to ecological imbalance • Uncontrolled supply chain i.e., uncharted routes and porous borders • Knowledge gaps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-biodegradable – ghost fishing / non-selective • Land and aquatic pollution • Loss of revenue for not licensing fishers |

Table 3: Results of group work on solutions implemented so far by the district to combat monofilament nets

| Solutions | Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota | Salima | Mangochi |
|---|---|---|--|
| What has worked and why? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrest and prosecution of offenders Confiscation of fishing gear vessels and engine Disposal of the confiscated gears Conducting awareness meetings Establishment of Task Force committees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Task Force Committee (in operation) Confiscation of monofilament nets from shops – good collaboration amongst stakeholders Enforcement patrols – reduction of monofilament from 23,000 units in 2023 to 11,329 units in 2024 Monofilament net ban (2019) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institution on Task Force Committees – through Task force, net traders are no longer selling in shops Sensitisation / stakeholder engagement Spot checks operations Water patrols conducted frequently Ban on importation of MF |
| Why measures implemented have not worked | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment of the law and still using outdated fisheries Act Community enforcement Unsealed borders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community participation: conflict of interest amongst BVC/local leaders Compliance to regulations – resistance to change Use of unchartered routes Jumping/absconding bail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Stakeholder engagement Efficiency factor Hostility during interception of MF in unchartered route |
| What is missing to implement successfully? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political will Adequate resources (boats, engines) Human resources Capacity building Coordinating and collaboration amongst stakeholders and government agencies Amendment/review of legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial resources Incentives e.g., risk allowances Political will Equipment Legislative (updated/revised/amend) Harmonisation of policies and stakeholders Adequate manpower Monitoring of unchartered routes Capacity building (ongoing) Research – citizen science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent patrols (resources) Toll free numbers, to give anonymous tip offs Technology gadgets e.g., drones for patrolling unchartered routes Inclusion in Act that LFMA are able to fine offenders, in liaison with MCS officers Empower MRA to be able to check goods in transit Chiefs performance assessment to be linked to curbing MF presence |

6 Stakeholder presentations

6.1 District Joint Monofilament Committees' success stories

Four out of the five district councils shared success stories behind the District Joint Monofilament Committees (also called Monofilament Taskforces).

6.1.1 Nkhotakota

The Nkhotakota Monofilament Task Force was formed with the aim of eradicating gillnets made of monofilament that are sold in shops. The task force comprises fisheries officers, Ripple Africa officers, Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) officials, Malawi Police Service (MPS) officers, magistrates, environmental department representatives, and trade officials.

The Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources for Nkhotakota district, Mr. Zingeni, mentioned that two meetings were conducted in 2025, with the aim to prepare for confiscation of illegal fishing gears in shops. The exercise was conducted despite taking place during the election period. In 2024, they organised awareness campaigns in hotspot areas where they among others issued warnings to shop owners to stop selling monofilament nets. The Taskforce also developed action plans to guide them in implementing the activities. In August 2025, during the presidential elections, the Taskforce successfully confiscated 286 pieces of monofilament nets. The shop owners will face court proceedings now that the elections have passed. Mr. Zingeni shared that the committee is very active and benefits from support from the NGO Ripple Africa.

Challenges:

The major challenge encountered is political interference, especially during the elections. Further operations are planned in trading centres in Liwaladzi, Dwangwa, and Mwansambo.

6.2 Karonga

The Karonga Monofilament Task Force comprises several stakeholders, including police, Malawi army, the District Commissioner, and the other stakeholders.

Prof. Mvula presented the activities of the committee on behalf of the committee Chairperson the Chief Mwelang'ombe. The committee conducted awareness campaigns to end monofilament nets at Chitimba, Chilumba, Ngala and Karonga Boma. The Task Force received information that foreigners would be selling monofilament nets. They confiscated nets from these areas, which are being kept at the fisheries office in the district as they were not collected by the offenders. The committee is to contact the magistrate for disposal of the nets. Different spot checks were conducted in net-selling shops at Chilumba, Boma, and Songwe Border, and shops involved in selling monofilament nets were closed. The shop owners were required to attend civic education course, after which they were given a 30-day amnesty to dispose of their nets.

Challenges:

The Taskforce is generally proving successful; however, they lack patrol boats to control patrols on the lake, and depend on the Army's boats, which are not always available. Offenders sometimes escape the district, making it impossible for the Task Force to follow them. There is no public budget allocated to the Task Force. It relies on projects for the conduct of its activities.



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6.3 Mangochi

Mangochi's Joint Monofilament Committee is conducting activities with support from the NGO Ripple Africa. These activities include awareness campaigns and confiscation of the nets. Since beginning of their operations in 2024, the Task Force has confiscated 18 pieces of monofilament nets. One court case was submitted; however, a challenge is that culprits do not come to court to attend their trial.

Mangochi is the district with the highest number of uses of monofilament nets. This might be partly explained by the proximity of Mangochi to Mozambique. Fishers in Mangochi also buy monofilament nets from other districts, such as Machinga. Thanks to the action of the Task Force, no selling point can be found at Mangochi Boma. However, in Mangochi as well as in the other districts, the sale of nets has moved away from traditional shops and is now being done hiding.

The Task Force is chaired by a trader and former monofilament seller. This is an asset for the Task Force, who can provide intelligence about the trade of monofilament nets, including information on shops selling such nets. The Chairperson used to buy monofilament in Blantyre, which had been sourced in Zambia, where most monofilaments are purchased. There are large shops in Zambia owned by Chinese and Indians, which act as big supply hubs. Those nets do not go through the border and therefore escape official routes. One solution to address this would be to set up roadblocks on the roads used by smugglers, and to sensitise the agents in charge of mounting the roadblocks. Monofilament that enters Malawi can be labelled as wrappers. There are/were legal nets produced in the country however some factories stopped production because there was no demand, if there is demand, they said they can restart producing.

6.4 Salima

Salima's Joint Monofilament Committee's activities to stop the use of monofilament nets included several awareness meetings with the fishers, business owners and local leaders, i.e., at Chipoka and Senga Bay. They conducted targeted sensitisation of the Fisheries Association, with the aim to empower them to confiscate monofilament nets. The Task Force confiscated over 1,000 pieces of monofilament nets. Eight (8) cases have been taken to court.

The Task Force receives support from Ripple Africa and the district council.

6.5 Discussions

- **Average life span of monofilaments:** This highly depends on the use of the net. In average, it was argued that a net could be used for a month (if used every day, as fishers do fish every day), however opinions collected during the workshop and the field visit indicate that if well preserved (no entanglement during fishing, no long sun exposure), a net could last until maximum six months. However, it could also be one day, if the net gets entangled or in case of bad weather condition, as nets are light and can easily get destroyed. This is far less than multifilament nets, which can last up to 4-5 years.
- **Governance of JMCs:** The JMC were established under the initiative of the Department of Fisheries. Yet there is no formal governance structure or MoUs amongst the actors involved.



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- **Financial budget and resources:** A major impediment is the insufficient financial resources, at all levels. Budget for the District Fisheries Officers come from the central government. Some mechanisms had been foreseen for districts and LFMA's to generate further resources, from licences and fines. There is a dedicated account that should be used for money collected from fines, however most of the time fines are paid into the Treasury account (account number 1). Laws and by-laws also foresee that districts and LFMA may impose additional licence fees at their level, which would help them generate additional fund. However, the challenge is that most artisanal fishers do not pay licenses, although those are very low (3,000 kwacha, circa 1.50 USD). The reason for this is because they do not see how the fees from those licenses are reinvested in the sector and profit them. As a result of this, although the law foresees licences, fishing in Lake Malawi is de facto open access. One exception is the Nkhosakota district, which imposes additional licence fees, which are reinvested in the fisheries. Therefore, JMC's activities are dependent on projects and would need long-term funders.
- **MRA officials:** shared that the issue of monofilament nets was largely not understood by agents of the authority, and that there would be a need to develop awareness material and sensitise them to the issue. Fisheries officers, too, indicated that the workshop provided them with new information about monofilament nets, showing that there is a need for increase sensitisation and capacity building also within the Department.
- **Illegal gears:** The participants recalled that besides monofilament nets, there are still other illegal fishing gears used on the Lake, which also justifies continuing stepping up national MCS complementary to regional efforts.
- **Local fishing management authority:** The lack of activeness of LFMA's was highlighted as being a major challenge. This is partly due to the lack of support of some local leaders, who are responsible for overseeing BVCs in their stratum. Whilst the setting up of BVCs all along the lake can be a key solution to address the issue of monofilament nets, there is a need to strengthen those BVCs and to find solutions to encourage stronger engagement. The delay in vetting by-laws of the BVC is an issue that prevents full empowerment of the BVC to fulfil their duties. By-laws must be vetted at district, and at national level they must be signed by the Magistrates and vetted by the Minister of Justice, and delays are extensive. Approving by-laws can take more than five years. As all by-laws include some similar core provisions in terms of the powers devoted to BVCs, one recommendation was to include those core provisions to the Act.
- **Political interference:** More transparency could be one solution against this, for instance through the Media. The Media is already cooperating closely with the District Councils to communicate about law enforcement actions, such as confiscation of monofilament nets.
- **Fines are not deterrent enough:** Amounts are fixed by the Act, which is outdated. There was a process for amending the law. For the amended law, Judiciary recommended that all fines should be multiplied by 1000 and sentences by 1.5.

Picture 6: Participant during discussions



6.6 Experience sharing from Ripple Africa

Mr. Sam Manda made a presentation on how Ripple Africa collaborates with government and other stakeholders in curbing the use of monofilament nets under the project “Fish for tomorrow”. The project aims at empowering local communities to sustainably manage and use fisheries resources. It has the aim to give communities ownership over their fisheries, identify and protect fish breeding areas, and promote adherence to fishing regulations. This Project is being implemented in all districts bordering Lake Malawi.

Results of the Project so far have included:

- **Training:** Establishment and training of Local Fisheries Management Authorities such as BVCs, FAs and other stakeholders.
- **Sanctuaries:** Protection of fish breeding areas/sanctuaries.
- **Legislation:** Implementation of Fisheries Conservation and Management legislation, rules, regulations and guidelines. This has included
 - support to Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota and Salima Districts in developing fisheries by-laws. Those bylaws were approved by the respective District Councils and are now ready for vetting process.
 - support to Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota, Salima and Dedza Districts to sign Fisheries Management Agreement with the Direction of Fisheries.
 - operational support to net confiscation activities, with a total confiscation of 2,054.54 pieces (shops) and 3,209 units (Beaches) of monofilament, and 99 other illegal fishing gears.

Despite these successes, the Project experiences several challenges, which are similar to the challenges highlighted by the participants during group work and discussions, including:

- Persistent influx of monofilament nets on beaches.
- Inactivity of local management bodies (LFMAs).
- Limited leadership support and political interference.
- Delay in vetting bylaws.
- Lack of long-term funding.



7 Group Work 2: understanding the monofilament net supply chain

This part of the workshop focussed on the supply chain of monofilament nets. Per Erik Bergh started with an initial input, which intended to track back the value chain of the nets from their place of production to the region. The results show complex transnational value chain from China to East African ports, and then to inland countries.

Figure 4. Overview of the monofilament nets supply chain, from producer to end user



Mr. Bergh provided an estimation of the value of monofilament nets and margins generated at each step as it goes through the value chain:

| Step in the value chain | Price | Margin per net |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Export sale price | USD 1 per net | Low: USD 0.10 per net |
| Importer | 2USD per net (price×2) | High: 100% |
| Cross-border multiplier | 6USD per net (price×3) | High: 200% margin |
| Vendor (final retail value) | 10-12 USD per net (price x ≈ 2)* | High: 100% |

*Confirmed by participants based on experience

Based on those estimates, the final retail value for 80,000 monofilament nets used in Malawi (as per 2024 frame survey) would be **USD 800,000 – 1,1 million per year.**

Total profit accumulated across the value chain would account to 9-11 USD per net, and 700,000 – 1 million USD per year for 80,000 monofilament nets.

Per Erik Bergh presented certain strategies to import monofilament nets through ports in the region. Experience shows that illegal monofilament nets are often declared under non-fisheries HS codes (an internationally standardised numerical classification used to identify traded goods for customs) such as:

- 3926.90 – Other articles of plastic
- 5608.19 – Knotted netting of twine, cordage or rope, of man-made textile materials, other than fishing nets
- 3925.90 – Plastic articles for agriculture (e.g. shading, fencing, or bird protection)

In Malawi, the customs code used for monofilament nets is HS5404.

By avoiding codes related to “fishing nets”, importers bypass prohibitions under fisheries or customs control lists and may qualify for lower tariffs or even agricultural exemptions. In addition to bypassing bans for monofilament in place in many countries in the region, this is also a loss for revenues from trade, as agriculture products often benefit from more favourable import conditions.

When nets are declared as “agricultural protective netting” (bird nets, crop shading), importers can access:



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- Reduced import duty or VAT — in many SADC states, agricultural materials (e.g. irrigation, shading nets, protective mesh) fall under *duty-free* or *0–5 % import tariffs*.
- Subsidised import programmes — in some cases, agricultural inputs benefit from *government subsidy* or *donor-funded exemptions* under agricultural input support programmes.
- Simplified customs clearance — agricultural materials are often processed with fewer documentary checks than industrial or fisheries equipment.

This means an importer could *legally* import monofilament rolls labelled as “bird protection netting” at 0–5 % duty instead of 20–30 % (or total prohibition) for fishing gear.

Actors involved in the supply chain are likely to be few at the top (few importers) with growing number along the chain. It was argued that law enforcement at the bottom of the pyramid (+50,000 fisheries actors on Lake Malawi), where the users are, might not be the most effective, as MCS resources are limited and it is impossible to act on all fishers. Actions might be more effective if targeting harder law enforcement actions at the steps of the chain before the nets reach Lake Malawi, combined with soft law enforcement and sensitisation at the user level.

A mix of incentives and deterrence could be considered:

- **Establish operational task force/intelligence unit** - intelligence driven operations targeting importers and smuggling operations, involving fisheries, customs, police and other relevant actors, for information sharing and joint case tracking and enforcement actions. The police generally have special units for drugs, this could also be developed for monofilament nets.
- **Reduce the legal-net price gap** – e.g., remove import duty on approved nets or provide co-operative bulk purchasing.
- **Increase availability** – ensure licensed vendors supply coastal districts continuously.
- **Raise enforcement visibility (deterrence)** – more consistent market seizures and shoreline checks to raise risk perception.
- Set up a hotline with reward – for anonymous tips.
- **Net-exchange schemes** – trade in old monofilament nets for subsidised legal nets.
- **Community champions** – use respected local fishers to promote compliant practice

7.1 Pre-group discussions

- It was argued that there might be more political interference at the top of the pyramid.
- The importance of collaboration between fisheries and MRA was highlighted by the Director for capture fisheries.
- MRA proposed that products that are similar to monofilament nets and could be smuggled under false customs code could be identified and communicated at borders for thorough verifications. The customs code used for monofilament nets in Malawi is HS5404.
- Monofilament nets are often concealed under other products. MRA has some scanners that are malfunctioning. This issue will be raised with management to ensure that scanners at the border are functioning.
- MRA needs to be trained to understand the issue of monofilament nets, as they were not aware of the issue of monofilament nets before the workshop. There is a high need for sensitisation.
- MRA thinks that some of the HS-referenced mosquito nets entering the border are in fact monofilament nets.
- MRA could extract information on trade of mosquito nets from their internal system.
- It was argued that MRA should be closely involved in the district JMCs.

- Trainings of MRA at the border will take place in February (supported by the World Bank). It was argued that it is important to train officers not only at borders but throughout the country, as MRA functions on a rotational basis.
- MRA procured seven drones, which they intend to use by the beginning of 2026, after sensitisation of the communities is completed.

Picture 7: Initial input from Per Erik Bergh on the monofilament value chain



7.2 Working groups

Following this presentation, participants were divided into the same three groups, per district. The objective was to go more in-depth into the supply chain, to generate knowledge based on the experience from the district stakeholders about:

- where the fishers buy the nets/who the sellers are
- distribution hubs
- where the nets come from and how (incl. routes taken to enter Malawi)
- who is involved at each stage of the supply chain

The details of the results of the Group work are presented in Table 4 below.

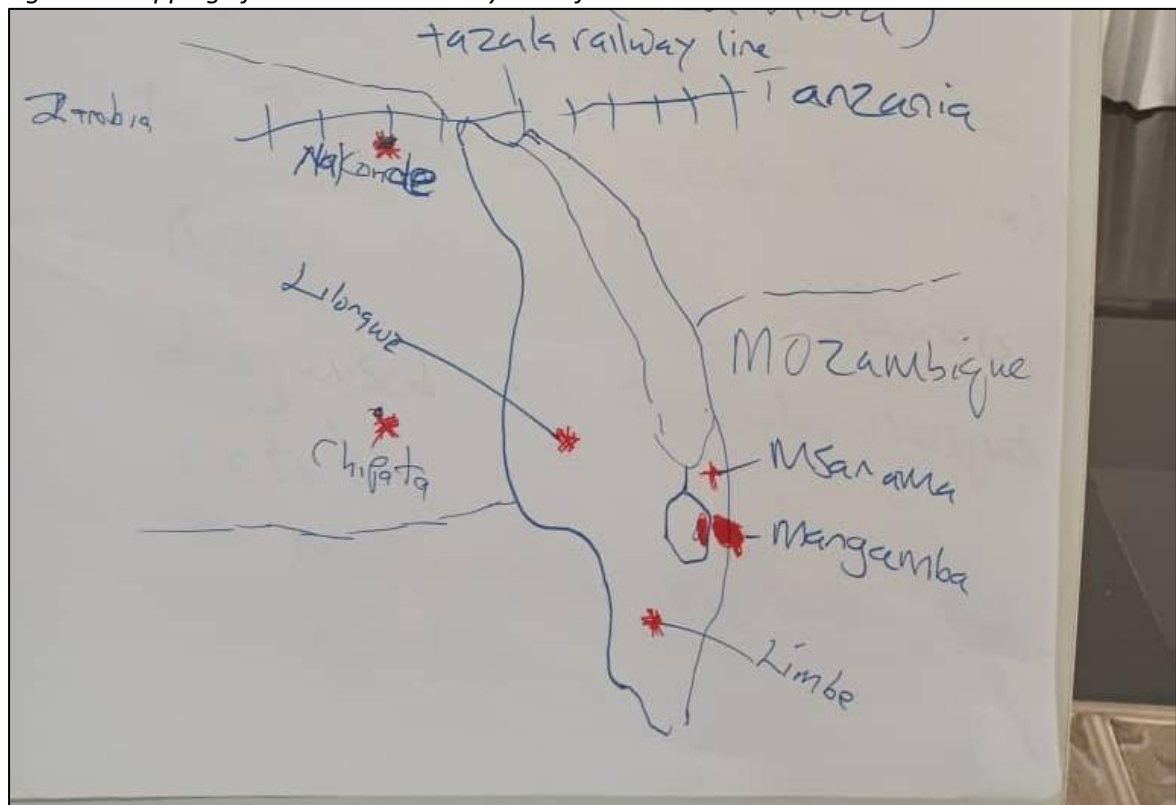


Table 4: Results of group work on understanding the supply chain of monofilament nets

| | Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota | Salima | Mangochi |
|---|--|--|---|
| Where do fishers buy their nets? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shops, vendors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shops, mobile vendors, smugglers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shops (including from neighbouring districts), mobile vendors (mostly use motorcycles) |
| Distribution hubs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanzania Zambia Mozambique Locally (Mzuzu, Limbe, Lilongwe, Blantyre, Machinga, Dedza) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agents Vendors Illegal distributors Distribute hubs outside the country | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limbe Lilongwe Chipata (Zambia) |
| How they enter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official routes declared as mosquito nets, zitenje (clothing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Songwe (at border with Tanzania) Mbilima (border with Tanzania), Mchinji (12 kilometres from the Zambian border) Chiponde (border crossing with Mozambique) Ntocha (bordering Mozambique) Nkhata Bay Nkhota Kota Non-official routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the Lake Mbalachanda (Mzimba) Titi area (Chitipa) Muyombe-Hewe (Rumphi) Kanyangale (Nkhota Kota) Edingeni (Mzimba) Marka – lower shire Ngokwe- Machinga | <p>Outside the country (China, Zambia, Tanzania), with 2 possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To importer, to shop, to middleman; or To shop, to middleman, to fisher (see graphs) <p>Routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mozambique to Salima through water and road transport Zambia to Salima through Mchinji, Mzimba, Chitipa and Kasungu District to District by road transport and water | <p>Water transport from China to ports in Tanzania and Mozambique</p> <p>Railway transport from TZ to Zambia (Tazala Railway line)</p> <p>Road transport (containers disguised as textile mosquito nets)</p> |
| Mode of transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicles Vessels Motorcycles Bicycles On foot Ox-cart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution within the district through vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles Between districts through the lake | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Railway transport from TZ to Zambia (Tazala Railway line) Road transport (containers disguised as textile mosquito nets) Motorcycles via unchartered routes |

| | Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhatakota | Salima | Mangochi |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Who is involved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese nationals (Production) Indians (Distributors/Wholesalers) Locals (smugglers/retailers/transporters/processing and distribution) Final user/fishers <p>Actors who should be involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRA (declaration/taxes) Police (Border/roadblock checks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> China (producer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Importer (traders, distributors) → Seller (shops, vendors, smugglers) Fishers (gear owners) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production (China) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Supplier (Alibaba/China) → Shipment (various containers) → Ports (TZ and Mozambique) → Wholesalers (Zambia, Mozambique, Limbe, Lilongwe) → Local distribution (mobile motorcycles, shops, etc.) Fishers |

Figure 5. Mapping of trade routes used by monofilament to enter Malawi



7.3 Discussions

- It was proposed to collaborate with the Wildlife unit (Wildlife Crime Officers (Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW))), which already has informants.
- The drivers of the motorbikes in Malawi are nationals, not foreigners.
- It was suggested to conduct audits of all companies that are importing material from China, to generate intelligence on what product was imported, as there is a doubt in the credibility of the documentation provided to MRA. This would imply that whilst a lot of monofilament nets are smuggled into Malawi, a lot of them enter legally.
- Risk assessment of importers would be useful to support generation of intelligence and targeted operations. A proposal could be to develop a methodology to gather systematic intelligence.
- It is necessary to find the HS customs code for monofilament in China (Malawi: 5404)
- There is a gap in information-sharing between fisheries and MRA. The Department should notify MRA of any relevant findings, and request support from MRA.
- The legislation in neighbouring countries must be analysed (e.g., in Mozambique the use of nets is only partially illegal, in inland waters, however it is not in marine waters).
- There is cooperation in place with the neighbouring countries.
- There is a need to ensure that actors involved are then taken to court.
- Goods controls act control sanctions on prohibited items – as long as there is a prohibition / fines can be 10x higher than the value of the consignment (if beyond 10,000) can also involve imprisonment – there is also a committee
- There is interest to engage in a dialogue between the Ministry and China and with suppliers of monofilament nets

Picture 8: Participant during Working Group



8 Group Work 3: mapping of relevant actors

After extensive knowledge was gathered on the issue of monofilament nets, the last working group of the workshop had the objective to identify all actors that could and should play a role in a national strategy to address the issue of monofilament nets in Malawi. This included discussions in plenary on the role of those actors, and their need to fulfil their role.

Table 5: Relevant primary actors important for a national monofilament net strategy

| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Fisheries authorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing guidelines, policies and regulations • MCS • Fisheries law enforcement • Training and outreach • M&E • Coordinating multi-agency/stakeholder cooperation efforts to combat monofilament nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources/ finances • Training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how to conduct successful enforcement ○ court proceedings (how to handle cases in courts – to be a witness) ○ evidence collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toll free number with incentive • Amendment of legislation / law is outdated (1997) – amendment was under process; however the amended law did not go to parliament. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Higher fines – see as example what is done in the forestry act (which 5 to 10 million), custody sentence in default of a fine – for transporters, dealers – these fines must be informed ○ Fines should be tailored to the involvement of the actors, depending on their role (possession, use, transportation) – all this should be established in a dedicated document. ○ Take as example the MRA law using currency points instead of amounts. The Act could indicate that the value of currency points is fixed via regulations, to allow easier update. This would permit to update regulations every year. ○ As an orientation for adequate fines, the Judiciary recommended that all fines should be multiplied by 1000, and sentences by 1.5. |
| Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcing the monofilament ban • Impounding intercepted consignments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation of customs officials, incl. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sensitisation material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with fisheries (MoU) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ request should be made by the Department of Fisheries (DoF) to MRA |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|---|---|---|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ trainings on how to identify monofilament nets for all MRA agents (due to MRA staff rotation system) ● Support to gather intelligence ● Empowering MRA regional/district officers with adequate knowledge on the issue /sensitisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ this should involve better communication on relevant findings and actions taken between MRA and DoF ● Develop sensitisation material and train all MRA officials (not only at border) on the issue of monofilament nets and on how to identify them. ● MRA to raise the issue of the importance of having functioning scanners at borders. ● Operational activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MRA to conduct audits of all companies that are importing material from China, to generate intelligence on what product was imported and to verify documentation ○ MRA to extract information on trade of mosquito nets from internal system. ○ MRA should be more closely involved in the JMCs ○ Statistics on imports of all goods that could be confused with monofilament nets should be generated ○ Statistics and information generated through above operational activities and experience of MRA officials should be compiled to build up intelligence to support operations |
| Joint Monofilament Committees (District level) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sensitisation (meeting local leaders, fishing communities) ● Enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial resources (financed by projects) ● Training ● Access to technical assistance from the district fisheries office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Committees should be maintained, and their activities should continue as part of national strategy as highlighted as an effective measure ● Develop guidelines for those committees |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines/ToRs of the committees | |
| <p>Fishers <u>Commercial (Commercial Fisheries Association (CFA)) and small-scale</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance Reporting on fishing activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative fishing gears Peer educators | <p>Solutions to promote alternative fishing gears:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schemes like buy-back to exchange monofilament nets with multifilament nets, <u>associated with safeguards</u>, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sanctions in case of non-compliance introduction of reporting schemes – with incentives Loans could be considered but carefully, as they could lead to buying of more monofilaments Peer-to-peer sensitisation (using champions) Conduct more research on the value chain of the monofilament nets, incl. cost analysis – to be used for sensitisation |
| <p>Beach Village Committees (BVC)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement (through by-laws, management plans, fisheries Act) Sensitisation MCS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent training Resources for enforcement Technical support from DoF and the District Fisheries Office Uniforms and PPE Visibility material for their operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for reporting (e.g., reward for information provided through a toll-free reporting number) operations, e.g., financial or airtime (practiced in TZ) Exploring further areas for financing of activities to support self- and sustainable financing |

Table 6: Relevant secondary actors important for a national monofilament net strategy

| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|---|--|--|--|
| Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Dissemination • Documenting success stories • Highlighting hazards on use of monofilament nets • Supporting whistle blowers • Accompanying DFO during net confiscation operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to go in the field to conduct meetings with chiefs, fishers and businesses ○ to buy airtime to record programmes on the radio and jingles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting the media more frequently to such workshops and meetings – to strengthen knowledge of media about the situation • Organising training/information meeting targeted to the media, including technical aspects related to fisheries • Supporting whistle blowers (e.g., setting up a direct line/dedicated number to contact the media) |
| Police (including marine police) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprehending culprits • Providing security during law enforcement operations • Participating in inspection • Conducting investigation and prosecution • Evidence collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitising all police officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ on the dangers of monofilament nets ○ on fisheries law • Support from the public / support from stakeholders • Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving national police wildlife crime officers (CID section) to support enforcement of the ban • engaging community policing members (Community police forums (CPF)) from rural areas as unchartered routes go through rural areas |
| Community Police Forums (CPF) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a link between the police and local stakeholders, incl. traditional leaders and local residents, to improve communication and collaboration on tackling crime and anti-social behaviour • Reporting abuse and work with police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See recommendations for the police |
| Judiciary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trialling cases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for better interaction with | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amended law should include all core provisions |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|--|--|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacting laws and by-laws | <p>fisheries department to capacitate/advise them</p> | <p>that need to be included in by-laws, to by-pass the issue of the extensive delays of adopting by-laws. This would automatically give the LFMAs the enforcement powers needed to fulfil their mandate.</p> |
| <p>District councils (including DFOs, District counsellors, Trade officers, District Environment Sub-Committee (DESC) – see below</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing Making local policy and decisions on local governance, including by-laws M&E Supporting LMFAs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitisation and training Resources to conduct operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toll free number with incentive |
| <p>➤ DFOs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries law enforcement MCS Training and outreach M&E Coordinating multi-agency/stakeholder cooperation efforts to combat monofilament nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political will | <p>Same as national level</p> |
| <p>➤ District Counsellors</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing oversight and facilitating development at the local level Representing their ward at the district council and presenting their constituents' concerns and needs. Developing District Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political will Sensitisation | |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | <p>Plans and budgets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilising resources and ensuring effective implementation of projects at the local level, working with LFMA's • Promoting unity and cooperation among traditional leaders, MPs, and the community • Raising and collecting local taxes and user fees and charges | | |
| <p>➤ Trade officers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting DoF to identify shops and conduct inspections to ensure legality of products sold | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation to remedy knowledge gap in terms of MF nets, incl. what products are banned • Cooperation with DoF and DFOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation to be done in all trade offices, even those not bordering Lake Malawi (all districts), as offenders may use lack of communication/information amongst department / between offices to take advantage of loopholes |
| <p>➤ DESC</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on environmental issues/provide technical guidance • Monitoring and inspections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation on monofilament nets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DESC has already set up certain structures – recommendation that JMC could be coordinated by the DESC • Organising similar workshop on sensitisation to MF for DESC |
| <p>Local leaders</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting LFMA's • Overseeing fishers in their village • Sensitisation • Law enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government support / enhanced relationship with fisheries officers • Government support to enforce the ban | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All relevant solutions proposed to enforce the ban |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|--|--|---|---|
| Women processors and traders | Essential link between fishers and consumers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying fish from fishermen at landing sites Processing fish Selling fish on local markets and in cities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative sources of livelihood to be able to afford not to buy fish from MF, in particular diversification of activities and value-adding activities (freezing, drying) Need for compensation for loss of activity (e.g., through better price for legal fish sold) Collective action – strengthening grouping into associations More recognition of the role of women in the conservation of fisheries resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing value-adding and diversification projects and partnerships for women Supporting sensitisation campaigns through existing women associations, in particular AW-FISHNET Introducing incentives for not buying fish from MF Supporting engagement of women through campaigns highlighting their role in conservation on the lake |
| Marine Department, Ministry of Transport & Public Works | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing boats (mostly chilimira, not dug-out canoes which are not registered) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce the law, which says that all boats must be registered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with boat owners to sensitise them on MF, and on the implications of actions by crew that they employ to go fishing with their boats Introducing sanctions for boat owners whose crew uses MF could be considered |
| CSOs (e.g., Ripple Africa) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting government efforts Supporting fundraising and mobilising support | | |
| Fisheries Champions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitisation Advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity Visibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying, and building the capacity of champions as multipliers for |



| Relevant Actors | Role/mandate to combat monofilament nets | Needs to fulfil their role | Recommendations and proposals from the workshop |
|---|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Gathering complaints from the public/ stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Resources to conduct more advocacy | sensitisation activities, and supporting those activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Using fisheries champions more in sensitisationDocumenting success stories |
| Wildlife Crime Officers (Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW)) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Combatting poaching and wildlife trafficking through efforts such as intelligence-led investigations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Need to be approached/ sensitised on the issue of MF | <ul style="list-style-type: none">engage collaboration with the Wildlife unit, which already has informants, to explore synergies and potential partnership, to generate intelligence and support operational activities |



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9 Closing and next steps

The Senior Deputy Director of Fisheries, Dr. Maxon Ngochera, gave the closing remarks on behalf of the Director of Fisheries. He thanked the participants for being an active audience in making contributions to the discussion. He emphasised the need to enhance collaboration, coordination and awareness to move together in this fight against the use of monofilament nets. He requested the DFOs and the MCSCC to champion this awareness drive. He indicated that the Director of Fisheries would soon after the workshop organise a meeting at the upper/central level to report back to the other sectors on the results of the workshop. He commended the participants for all the information generated, which will facilitate the elaboration of a case study for Malawi. The Director thanked SIF for supporting the workshop, as well as FishFORCE for providing the necessary resources for the organisation and the MCSCC.

“We need cooperation and planning to address the issue of monofilament nets” said Per Erik Bergh in his closing remarks, as he highlighted that the ultimate goal of a strategy should be to achieve compliance. The workshop generated a lot of recommendations, which should be acted upon. The results of this workshop will be used to identify elements that could form part of a national strategy document to strengthen action against illegal monofilament nets. The practical experiences will also support the elaboration of a Malawi case study, documenting experiences, challenges, lessons learned, and policy options. Finally, they will also be used as evidence base to support a regional call for action against monofilament nets, with the aim to inform regional policy advice at the level of the Technical Committee on Fisheries (TCF) and the SADC Ministers’ meeting.

Picture 9: Dr. Maxon Ngochera, Senior Deputy Director of Fisheries





10 Annexes

10.1 Annex 1. Workshop Agenda

Day 1: 27 October 2025

Time: 08.30-16:30

| Time | Agenda point | Resource persons |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 08:30-09:00 | Arrival of participants | SIF |
| 09:00-10:30 | Welcome and opening, and purpose of the training | Dr. Maxon Ngochera Traditional Authority Director of Fisheries District Commissioner SIF |
| | Introduction of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is who? Link to the monofilament nets issues | All participants |
| | Administrative information | SIF |
| 10:30-12:00 (incl. tea break) | Brief presentations on fisheries in Lake Malawi's districts (5 min per district) + national overview of Malawi fisheries Overview of fishing activities in your district <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how many fishers? what gears do they use? what do they target? are they organised? where does fishing take place? | Fisheries officers district representatives |
| 12:00-13:00 | Group work 1: understanding the monofilament net issue on Lake Malawi Initial input: Trends in monofilament nets and status by districts based on frame survey data Group 1: Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhota Kota Group 2: Salima Group 3: Mangochi Group works to exchange knowledge about the monofilament net issue in the respective districts, with the objective to document the issues. Part 1: Understanding the issue Part 2: Solutions implemented so far by the district | Research Centre Group work, all participants |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch break | |
| 14:00-15:00 | Group work 1 (continued) and presentation in plenary | Group work, all participants |
| 15:00-16:00 | Stakeholder presentation 1: Success stories behind the District Joint Monofilament Committees for the five districts of Mangochi, Salima, Nkhata bay and Karonga (Presentations) Discussions | Joint Monofilament Committees |
| 16:00-16:30 | Stakeholder presentation 2: Experience sharing from Ripple Africa | Ripple Africa |
| | Tea Break and end of Day 1 | |



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Day 2: 28 October 2025

Time: 09:00-16:30

| Time | Agenda point | Resource persons |
|-------------|---|------------------------------|
| 09:00-11:00 | Working Group 2: understanding the supply chain of monofilament nets – from end user to origin of supply Group 1: Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhota Kota Group 2: Salima Group 3: Mangochi | Group work, all participants |
| 11:00-11:15 | Tea Break | |
| 11:15-12:15 | Working Group 3: mapping of actors relevant for strategy to combat monofilament nets All groups together in plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant actors• Role of actors to combat monofilament nets (what they can do)• Needs to fulfil their role (incl. interaction with other actors) | All participants (plenary) |
| 12:15-13:00 | Working group 4: potential strategies/solutions Group 1: Karonga, Nkhata Bay, Nkhota Kota Group 2: Salima Group 3: Mangochi | Group work, all participants |
| 13:00:14.00 | Lunch Break | |
| 14:00-16:00 | Working group 4: potential strategies/solutions (cont.) All groups together in plenary | All participants (plenary) |
| | Closing session: your flagship measure to combat monofilament nets | SIF, all participants |
| | Tea break and end of training | |
| 18:00-21:00 | Function | All invited |

10.2 List of participants

| | NAME | STATION | DESIGNATION |
|----|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Dr. Hastings Zidana | Lilongwe | Director of Fisheries |
| 2 | Dr. Maxon Ngochera | Lilongwe | Senior Deputy Director |
| 3 | Funny Mkwiyo | Lilongwe | MCS Officer |
| 4 | Innocent Gumulira | Lilongwe | Deputy Director |
| 5 | Customs authorities | Blantyre | Import Authorities |
| 6 | Trascio Ngulube | Karonga | District Fisheries Officer |
| 7 | Patrick Moyo | Karonga | MCS Officer |
| 8 | Chair Joint Monofilament | Karonga | Committee Chairperson |
| 9 | Dellings Kamenya | Nkhata Bay | District Fisheries Officer |
| 10 | Evans Mataka | Nkhata Bay | MCS Officer |
| 11 | Chair Joint Monofilament | Nkhata Bay | Committee Chairperson |
| 12 | Symon Ngwira | Nkhota Kota | District Fisheries Officer |
| 13 | MCS Officer | Nkhota Kota | MCS Officer |
| 14 | FA representative | Nkhota Kota | Stakeholder |
| 15 | Chair MFC Denis | Nkhota Kota | Chair MFC |
| 16 | Jeremiah Kapatu | Nkhota Kota | Fisheries Officer |
| 17 | District Commissioner | Salima | District Commissioner |
| 18 | Patrick Zakeyo | Salima | District Fisheries Officer |
| 19 | MCS Officer | Salima | MCS Officer |
| 20 | Police investigator | Salima | Police Investigator |
| 21 | Traditional Authority | Salima | Stakeholder |
| 22 | Sam Manda | Salima | Ripple Africa |
| 23 | Chair Joint Monofilament | Salima | Committee Chairperson |
| 24 | Dr. Harold Sungani | Salima | Head Senga bay Research |
| 25 | Trade Officer | Salima | Trade Officer |
| 26 | Media | Salima | Zodiak |
| 27 | Media | Salima | Malawi News Agency |
| 28 | Chair Joint Monofilament | Mangochi | Committee Chairperson |
| 29 | William Chirwa | Mangochi | District Fisheries Officer |
| 30 | Police prosecutor Amos | Mangochi | Police prosecutor |
| 31 | Titus Phiri | Mangochi | Head Monkey Bay Research |
| 32 | Salim M'balaka | Mangochi | Chief Research Officer |
| 33 | Dr. Davie Khumbanyiwa | Mangochi | Head MCS |
| 34 | Allan Katola | Mangochi | MCS Officer |
| 35 | Limbani Ngulube | Mangochi | MCS Officer |
| 36 | Phillip Manduwi | Mangochi | CFA Chair |
| 37 | Maggie MRA Senior | Blantyre | |
| 38 | Per Erik Bergh | Gaborone | Facilitator SIF |
| 39 | Andréa Durighello | Gaborone | Facilitator SIF |

10.3 Additional information collected during field trip – 29-30 October

The workshop focussed on group discussions, with the objective to generate knowledge and collectively identify strategies that should be included in a national strategy to combat illegal monofilament nets. It was followed by two days field work in Senga Bay, Salima, to interview local actors involved in the value chain of monofilament nets, including traders, fishers, community members, BWC representatives, women fishmongers and processors, and document their experience.

10.3.1 Meeting with BVC leadership from Miswani landing site, Senga Bay

Major points of discussion:

- Miswani’s BVC leadership indicated that 10 years ago they were able to catch big sized fish and that the fishers were using only legal gears, which is no longer the case with today.
- Monofilament nets arrived from the North.
- The market is flooded with monofilament nets.
- Migratory fishers come to the site with monofilament nets.
- Monofilament nets do not last long, especially in the sun. According to them they could last up to 2-4 months, if well taken care of.
- An advantage of monofilament nets is that they are wide, and it is not necessary to connect several of them, whilst multifilament nets are too small for the fishers (not wide and not long enough), and they need to connect several of them. They generally need to connect 4 panels (nets) on the width, and 1.5 panels on the length side. This means that in total, they need 5.5 panels to make one usable net. Each panel costs 3,000 kwacha.
- In addition to the overall size of the nets, another issue is that the fishers do not find the mesh size of multifilament adequate for their activity. One possibility could be to work with the factories to create nets that meet the expectations of the fishers (2-ply and 3 1/2-inch mesh size nets) whilst also complying with existing regulations in terms of mesh size. Scientists should also be involved in that process. Some pilot projects could be developed, including programmes such as buybacks.
- Estimation of costs vs. life span:

| | Cost | Life span |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Monofilament nets | 1 unit (100m) = 27,000 kwacha (15.50 USD) | Up to 2-4 months (or considerably less, depending on usage and maintenance) |
| Multifilament nets | 5.5 panels at 3,000 each = 16.500 kwacha (9.50 USD) | 4-5 years |

- Therefore, monofilament nets are not less expensive than multifilament, and last significantly longer. However, information collected during the trip indicated that the price for monofilament has increased since June 2025, and used to cost 5,000 kwacha, which was in that case significantly cheaper.
- Whilst monofilament nets are more expensive, and it would be economically more rational to purchase multifilament nets; monofilament remains attractive because of its effectiveness. In one day, with monofilament, they could catch the equivalent of up to 4 buckets of ndunduma (*Diplotaxodon* spp), or 29.6 kg.

- To stop buying nets, they think that the best solution would be to cut the supply in shops and in the underground alternatives developed (in their area monofilament nets are stored in warehouses).
- There are eight “champions” in Salima using multifilament nets, who could be used more for sensitisation.
- The BVC leaders indicated some conflicts with the Commercial Fisheries Association.

Picture 10: Meeting with BVC leadership from Miswani landing site



10.3.2 Meeting with the district fisheries office of Salima, Nguo landing site, Senga Bay

Major points of discussion:

- The Lake is de facto open access, although the law foresees licences. Most artisanal fishers do not pay licenses, although those are very low (3,000 kwacha, circa 1.50 USD). The reason for this is because they do not see how the fees from those licenses are reinvested in the sector and profit them. It is difficult for fisheries officers to enforce the law in that regard. Because of this, most fishing gears are not licenced and therefore illegal. It would be necessary that money generated from licences is reinvested in the fisheries, to provide incentives to fishers to pay their licenses (example of Nkhotakota).
- The fisheries officers perceive that local leaders lack willingness to cooperate. It is normally agreed that those leaders would send regular reports to the fisheries officers, however this does not happen. It could be useful to set up a template and to have transparent reporting mechanisms in place.
- The office lacks resources needed to conduct patrols. They have one functioning patrol boat and another one which has no engine but could be rehabilitated. They conduct an average of 15 patrols per year; however, this depends on resources available.
- The budget of Salima’s fisheries office for activities amounts to 20 million kwacha per year (excluding workforce), circa 11,550 USD.

- There is no issue of monofilament nets at Nguo landing site, explained by the officers by the presence of the office and the ability of fisheries officers to patrol regularly, acting as a deterrent.
- An issue they have (also indicated by other districts) is that some offenders escape out of the district, hence avoiding their sanctions. There is no formal communication between the districts, it could be explored to set up a national communication platform similar to the one used by the MCSCC to communicate amongst countries (Basecamp platform). This may facilitate prosecutions.

Picture 11: Nguo landing site, Senga Bay, Salima



10.3.3 Meeting with women fishmongers and processors

These women fishmongers and processors are affiliated to the national chapter of AWFISHNET, Nguo landing site, Senga Bay

Major points of discussion:

- The association is composed of men and women; however their number is limited. Most women on the landing site are not formed in associations. They are affiliated with AWFISHNET Malawi. AWFISHNET provides advocacy, capacity-building, and market access targeting the 54 Member States of the African Union through National Chapters. AWFISHNET aligns with the African Union’s vision for agricultural growth (CAADP Kampala declaration), Agenda 2063, and the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for fisheries and aquaculture (PFRS), contributing to food security and economic development through intra-African fish trade and advocacy for inclusive growth.
- The women know the impact of monofilament nets on the ecosystem, and the risk of ghost fishing, although no monofilament nets are used at Nguo landing site. They are concerned about their future. However, they would still buy fish caught with monofilament because of a lack of alternative. “They would buy whatever is here”.
- Women do not pre-finance fishing campaigns.
- To stop buying fish from monofilament, they would need diversification opportunities in their business and compensation for the short-term loss encountered.

- Some of their fish is sent in card boxes to Blantyre and Lilongwe. It is not sold on the local market (although it seems from other discussions that most fish caught lands on the local market). This could allow for potential partnerships with end consumers in the cities, who could be ready to pay a higher price for fish not caught with monofilament (e.g., labelled 'sustainable fish'). This is an option that could be explored.
- The women expressed satisfaction for recognising their role in fish conservation.

Picture 12: Women fishmongers and processors affiliated to the national chapter of AW-FISHNET, Nguo landing site, Senga Bay

