

## Results of the preliminary survey on the population status of critically endangered Jipe Tilapia in Lake Jipe Tanzania after three years conservation work.

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A conservation project in Lake Jipe for the past three years has been conducted through financial support from the Rufford Fund for Nature Conservation. The project targeted protection of critically endangered Lake Jipe Tilapia *Oreochromis jipe* and its ecosystem in Tanzanian part. The project was initiated by a number of scientists from the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, Mwanga District Council and Mali Hai Club of Tanzania. Conservation activities undertaken include; environmental education and awareness program to the fishers, students, teachers and parents, establishment of school based environmental clubs, training on alternative income generating activities and tree planting in the nearby degraded catchment areas in the Lake surrounding villages. Following conservation activities in the past three years, a team of scientists conducted a two day preliminary survey to assess and compared the population status of the target species in year 2013 when the project started and after the end of the second phase of the project (i.e. November 2015).

The survey results showed that the size of the critically endangered Jipe Tilapia has improved in Lake Jipe Tanzania demonstrating the success of the project mission. This is because in 2013, the size of the Jipe Tilapia in the fishermen catch was 7-11 cm total length while in November 2015 the size of the individual fish was observed at a range of 15 to 25 cm total length. This could probably caused by the decline in the number of illegal fishing gears in the project area. This is because the dominant fishing gears in 2013 were the illegal gillnets of 1.5-2 mm mesh size that was estimated to be nearly 850 among 362 fishermen. However, following education and awareness program to the fishers, establishment and strengthening of Beach Management Units (BMUs) in the project area, the present survey indicated that the number of illegal fishing gears has declined to approximately 79 out of 415 fishermen. Also the number of legal fishing gears (3-3.5 mm mesh size) has increased from 117 in 2013 to 269 in November 2015. In addition, fish caught from the river mouth of Lake Jipe is large as compared to the one caught by fishermen in the Lake. The following are some pictures/images of the individual fish caught in our survey in November 2015.



Large size fish samples of critically endangered *Jipe Tilapia* (three above) caught in the Lake Jipe River mouth in November 2015. This is an indication of the improvement in the population status of the species after three years conservation work in the Lake.



Large size (15-17 cm total length) Jipe Tilapia from the fishermen catches in November 2015.



Project leader (Mr. Johnson) with five Jipe Tilapia (size 17-20 cm total length) in one of the landing sites in Lake Jipe Tanzania. Fishermen and fish brokers reported that there has been a gradual increase in the catch and individual fish size of the Jipe Tilapia following conservation activities in the Lake areas.



Project leader (Mr. Johnson) with Jipe Tilapia in one of the landing sites in Lake Jipe Tanzania. Fishermen and fish brokers reported that there has been a gradual increase in the catch and individual fish size of the Jipe Tilapia following conservation activities in the Lake areas.