



VANISHING WATER:

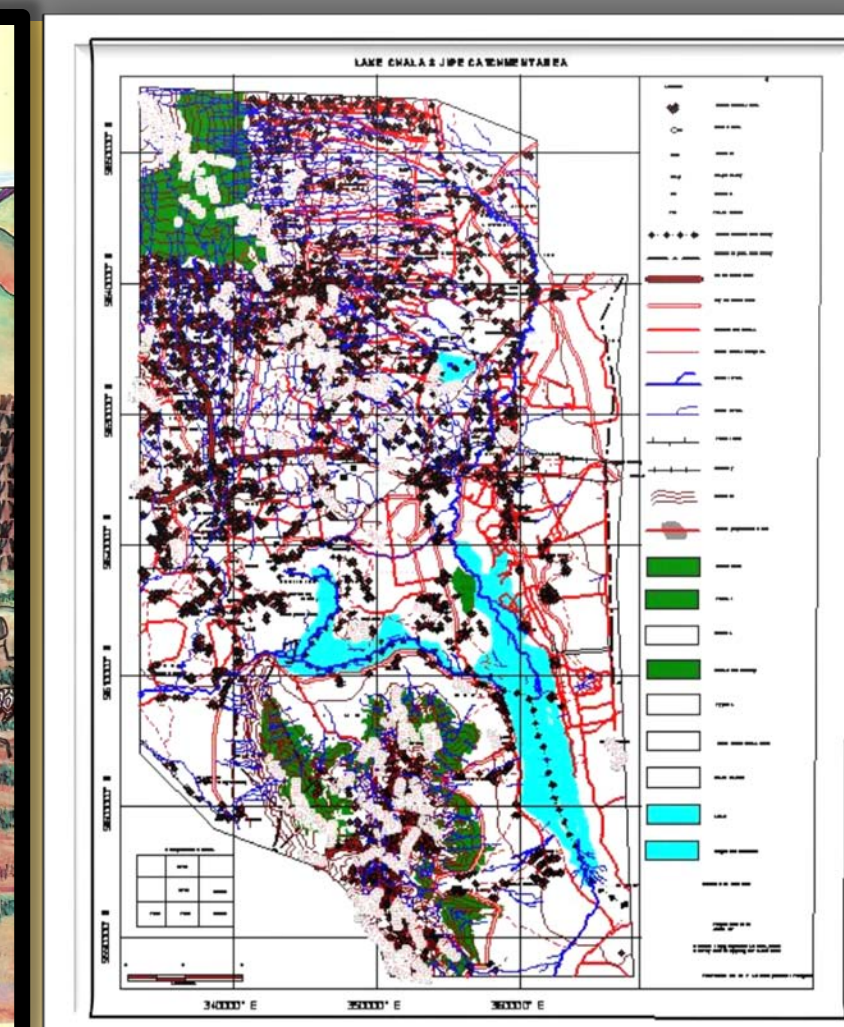
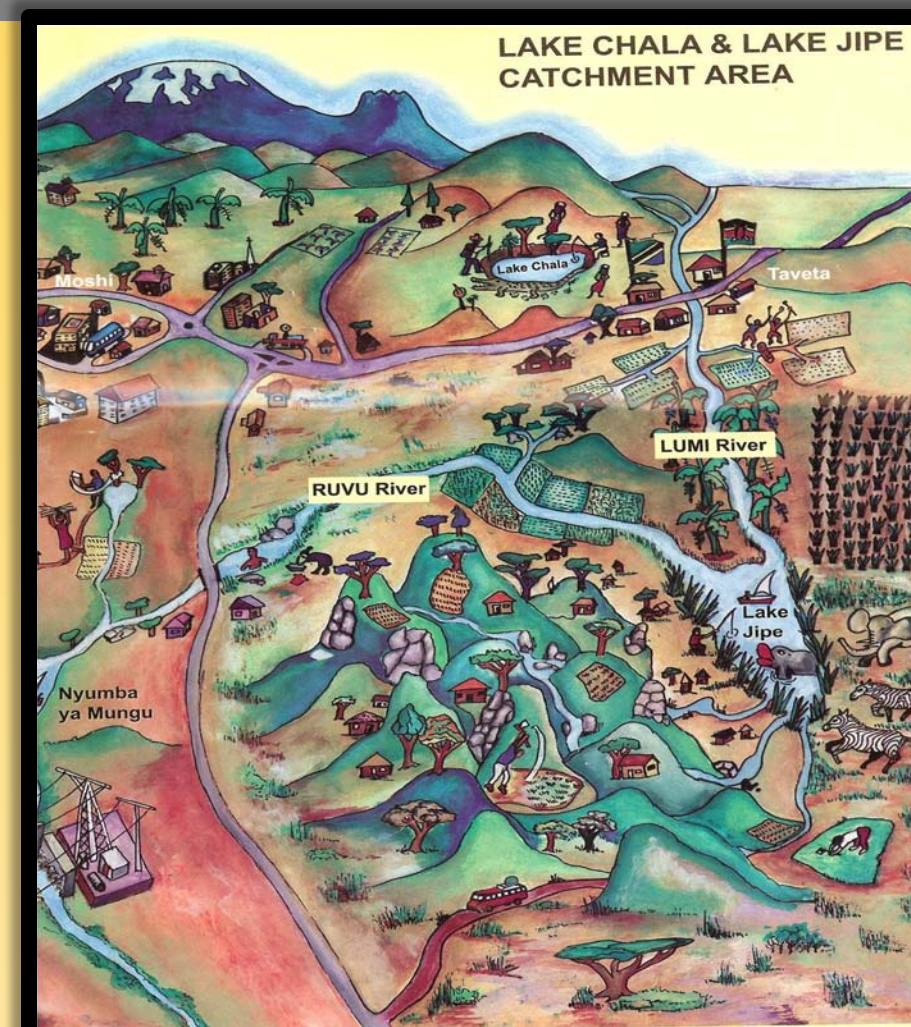
THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION OF LAKE JIPE, TANZANIA



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Introduction

Previous research on Lake Jipe focuses on the scientific aspects of the lake's degradation. This research is unique in its comprehensive approach and collaboration with the populace of the region. The trans-boundary Lake Jipe is a shrinking body of water on track to disappear entirely. A combination of issues have enabled the invasion of an exceptionally aggressive species. This species not only threatens the flora and fauna of the lake but devastates the livelihoods of the region's residents, including fishing, agriculture, and livestock. Lake Jipe's demise is a grave regional concern with national consequences.



Results

The accompanying graphs demonstrate the rapid transformation of Lake Jipe and the shrinkage of the lake over a very short period of time. The graphs also reveal that most residents believe that organizations addressing this problem have been and continue to be ineffective.

Conclusions

Water scarcity in the Lake Jipe basin has had devastating ramifications on the quality of life for residents of the lowlands and their livelihoods and livestock. The Tanzanian government has thus far failed to address the problem and efforts to promote microfinance as a solution have been inadequate. This research concludes that capacity-building training and programs utilizing the overabundant water hyacinth may provide a viable solution. Further research will need to assess the sustainability of commercial and non-commercial ventures utilizing the water hyacinth.

Methods

Prior to field work I familiarized myself with literature on environmental degradation, water scarcity, and trans-boundary resources. While in country I interviewed former Lake Jipe researchers and stakeholders, documenting the beliefs and opinions of Jipe's residents. Data collection entailed individual interviews, focus groups, and key informant interviews. The latter included representatives of: local, regional, district, and national Ministry of Water offices, the Pangani Basin Water Office, and PAMOJA, a local NGO. Kiswahili interviews were conducted with the assistance of a translator. When possible, interviews were carried out in English.



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