



# Mozambique

## Yao Elephant

In Mozambique, villagers in the Niassa reserve are modelling a sculpture of an elephant using old poaching traps to change the way people think about wildlife.

### COUNTRY

Mozambique

### LOCALISATION

Niassa Wildlife Reserve

### DATES OF THE PROJECT

February 2023 – July 2024

### ARTISTS INVOLVED

Jules Pennel and collective Yao Crochet

### PARTICIPANTS

Women from the Yao Crochet collective and village residents

### FUNDING

European Union (€50,000), Metis Fund (€15,000), Funds Luwire / Us fishing and wildlife / Biofund (€11,000), Irish Government (€9,000)  
Budget €85,000

### PARTNERS

National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC), NGO Wildlife conservation international (WCS)

### SECTOR AND SDG'S



# 129

ELEPHANTS WERE KILLED AT NIASSA IN 2017

# 8,500

ELEPHANTS LESS IN THE TOTAL POPULATION FROM 2013 TO 2018

# 1,000

PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY HAVE SEEN THE SCULPTURE

## PROTECTING THE GIANTS

In northern Mozambique, the Niassa National Reserve, the country's largest protected area at 42,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is one of the continent's last unspoiled wilderness areas. However, between 2011 and 2017, the reserve suffered major poaching problems, linked to the growing demand for ivory. In 2017, 129 pachyderms were killed in Niassa – and in the space of 5 years, the population has plummeted from 12,000 to 3,500 individuals.

Jobs are scarce for the 60,000 people living in the dozens of villages in the reserve. The ban on hunting and the damage caused to crops can lead to conflicts between humans and wildlife. Illegal logging and mining activities and climate change are also a threat to the animals.

Since 2018, a coordinated anti-poaching strategy has been implemented, and no elephant has been killed since.

## SHIFTING IMAGINARIES

To celebrate five years without poaching, and to change people's perceptions of wildlife, while promoting local skills and encouraging local employment, biologist Paula Ferro, who has already initiated the Niassa Yao Crochet women's collective, and Derek Littelton, who manages a concession in the reserve and is a sculptor, have come up with an ambitious project. The idea is to collectively create a monumental sculpture of a life-size elephant, the frame of which will be fashioned from old poaching traps.

After making a 2 meter-high prototype, the young French sculptor Jules Pennel undertook a co-creation project with five members of the Yao crochet collective – Josina, Matola, Norte, Cecilia and Roques – whom he trained in metalwork. Together, they made the life-size sculpture, the skin of which is made up of wool patchworks crocheted by the women of the Yao crochet collective.

The 'Papa Manhure' prototype travelled between Niassa and Maputo, and was seen by over 5,000 people. Papa Manhure was presented in July 2023 at an international environmental congress in the capital. The President of the Republic, Filipe Nyusi, was struck by this work of art, and encouraged his country to continue its efforts to protect biodiversity.

## THEY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE

*"They are aged between 17 and 48. They call themselves brothers and sisters. Most of them have never left the reserve. They have experienced war, disease, cyclones and drought. For the last three months, I've been training Josina, Matola, Norte, Cecilia and Roques to work with steel. It's their first official job. I'd be lying if I told you it was easy. I've lost count of the moments of anger, fatigue, incomprehension and joy. This elephant story is first and foremost an encounter. And what an encounter!"*

JULES PENNEL, ARTIST JULES PENNEL, ARTISTE