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Theme: Development
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Title: **If We Cannot Learn From the Past, We Are Bound to Re-Invent the Wheel or Repeat the Same Mistakes: Restoring the Chambo in Southern Malawi**

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Abstract: The Chambo is an important fish to Malawi's economy and livelihoods of local people in southern end of Lake Malawi. While worries about overexploitation of the chambo have been a source of concern since the 1930s, the biological and economic collapse of the fishery in Lake Malombe and the Upper Shire River in the early 1990s and the growing evidence of its decline in the Southeast Arm of Lake Malawi (the major productive area for the species) in recent years have galvanized the Government of Malawi towards attempts to restore the chambo to its former levels of production.

This article argues that while the proposed solutions for restoring the chambo might be well intentioned, they ignore the existing knowledge and scholarship about fisheries management in African fresh water lakes gathered over the last sixty years or so. Enough knowledge and information on the biological and scientific basis for regulating the chambo exists already. What has been missing is an understanding and appreciation of the social, economic, political and institutional drivers around exploitation of the chambo by the fishers. This has been the missing link. Future management solutions have to be based on the collective concerns of all potential users. More specifically, such solutions have to take cognisance of fishers' inputs, experiences, local knowledge and the way they view and define their problems. Without such process considerations, any future solutions will be like grappling in the dark in this enormous challenge concerning restoring the chambo stocks to their former status in the southern aquatic system.

Key words: chambo restoration, existing knowledge, stakeholder involvement.