

## Project Update: June 2018

### 1. Reconnaissance and preliminary study of the forest.

From 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017, we carried out our reconnaissance and set out some logistics by meeting the area chief, forest officer and some community members. We were also able to meet with the Kenya Forest Research Institute officer based in Usenge, Bondo. Our findings were helpful in enabling us to carry out our forest monitoring and assessment in the next activity. The forest guards and officers were very helpful in providing us the information regarding illegal harvesting and measures that can be done within the community to reduce this vice.



Figure 1: Picture showing entrance of Got ramogi and laying of leaves in an old pot before embarking on forest assessment. ©Moses Odhiambo.

On arrival at Got Ramogi, there are some cultural activities that are recommended by the community and some dos and don'ts. First is to offer thanksgiving to the ancestors by placing leaves in pots (as shown in figure 1 above) and also to not ask for directions when in the forest. These two norms are very important and were adhered to by the team.

### 2. Setting up of sample plots and biophysical assessment.

From 13<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018 we carried out two biophysical assessment activities for both flora and fauna. We were able to identify 16 different indigenous species (most importantly; *Milicia excels*, *Brachylaena hullensis* and *Ocotea usambarensis*) and four exotic plant species, 40 bird species, 10 butterfly species, two primates and five amphibians. We are currently preparing to compile a checklist, which will be used in for education at the forests' information center. Seven plants were not identified in the field (both through the guide books and online apps) so a plant press was made and the identification will be done later through the help of the National Museums of Kenya, Botany section.

We were able to identify some of the threats currently facing the forest including illegal logging and charcoal burning which has decimated populations of some important

indigenous trees. Harvesting of grass for roofing was also rampant in the grasslands of the forest. Even though this is allowed in the forest it's sometimes used as a disguise by unscrupulous community members to enter into the forest and burn charcoal.



Figure 2: Pictures showing determination of tree dbh, tree identification using PlantNet app and African Grey Hornbill.



Left: Mr. Ibrahim Onyango using a vegetation guide during forest assessment. Right: At the top of Ramogi Hill, identifying trees using vegetation guide books.



Left: Assessment of tree characteristics at sample plot 1. Right: Part of the project team doing biophysical assessment.