

Project Update: July 2018

The project implementation has started, and it is going as planned. From Bukavu (my home town), I travelled to Kindu by plane, where I met Placide KINYAMA MASUDI who became my field assistant. He had recently carried out a cartography study in Lomami National Park and he knew the park buffer zone very well.

We travelled by canoe, motorbike and on foot to reach the villages. We visited 24 villages of six different ethnic groups, including Tetela, Kusu, Silwambwa, Ngengele, Kuti (farmers) and Twa (hunter-gatherers). We discussed with village elders about the importance of the forest for local communities, and discussed the most important plants and animals consumed and traded. We also discussed about sacred animals and plants, and those used for traditional ceremonies. Moreover, we went to the forest with some hunters and plant collectors, to see how they carry out these activities.

After these 3 weeks of intense fieldwork activity, we went back to Kindu. Then, I started a short market survey on the medicinal plants commercialised in this city, which is the largest near Lomami National Park. I interviewed several vendors, asking the local name of the products sold, the diseases they cured, how much they cost, where were they collected, how often they sold them, etc. I also planned to investigate the bushmeat trade. However, the market where the bushmeat vendors are located was closed (it closes for 3 months every year, which I did not know).

Therefore, I went back to Bukavu to finalise data entry, analysis and start writing a non-academic report, which I will share with communities and park managers in a few months' time, during my second field trip to the study area (during which I will look at bushmeat trade). The aim of this research is to better understand how local communities use Lomami forest, so that some activities could be regulated and some alternative ones identified and promoted.



Batumike Rodrigue in the canoe, on the way to some villages.



Batumike Rodrigue during focus-group discussions with village elders in Ipasu and Ondjohu villages.



One of the hunters in the forest, showing us a trap.



Collecting bark from one of the trees used for medicine and medicinal plants sold at Kindu market.