

Project Update: January 2021

Summary

This activity aimed to inform local people that “without Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve (MRNFR), they may not have healthy wildlife and sustainable livelihoods, and without healthy forest, neither *R. kipunji* nor other species can survive”. Therefore, we conducted conservation education in villages adjacent to MRNFR to raise awareness and conservation importance of *R. kipunji*, as well as the importance of MRNFR on ecosystem services and communities’ livelihoods.



Introduction

The programme was conducted from October to December 2020. Facilitators from different organisations were involved, including three staff members from Tanzania Forest Services (TFS), two staff members and one student from Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST), one staff from Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, one staff from Kaengesa Environmental Society (KAESO), Rukwa and local people from village neighbouring the Mount Rungwe Forest Nature Reserve. Seven villages adjacent to the Mt. Rungwe Forest Nature Reserve (MRNFR) and which are directly or indirect impacted positively or negatively by the reserve were visited. These include Kibisi, Sikula, Ilolo, Bujingijila, Ndala, Kabale and Nditu. In each village all members were participants in the programme especially environmental village committee and village leaders. This was

encouraged in order to make sure that the knowledge provided may be transferred to other villagers who fails to attend the village meeting during the programme. Three meetings were held in each village on separate days. More than 200 local people were able to participate in the conservation education campaign. The aim of this education program was to raise kipunji conservation awareness in communities.

The programme

The programme was very well planned, well delivered and interactive, villagers seemed to have knowledge on environmental conservation but adherence to environmental regulations was a big challenge with some villagers still practicing human activities in the reserve such as taking firewood, hunting and killing animals, cultivating within water sources, starting fires in the farms nearby forest, etc. The education was given to villagers accordingly, especially the advantages of conserving Mount Rungwe Nature Reserve at family and national level at large, and effects of environmental degradation.

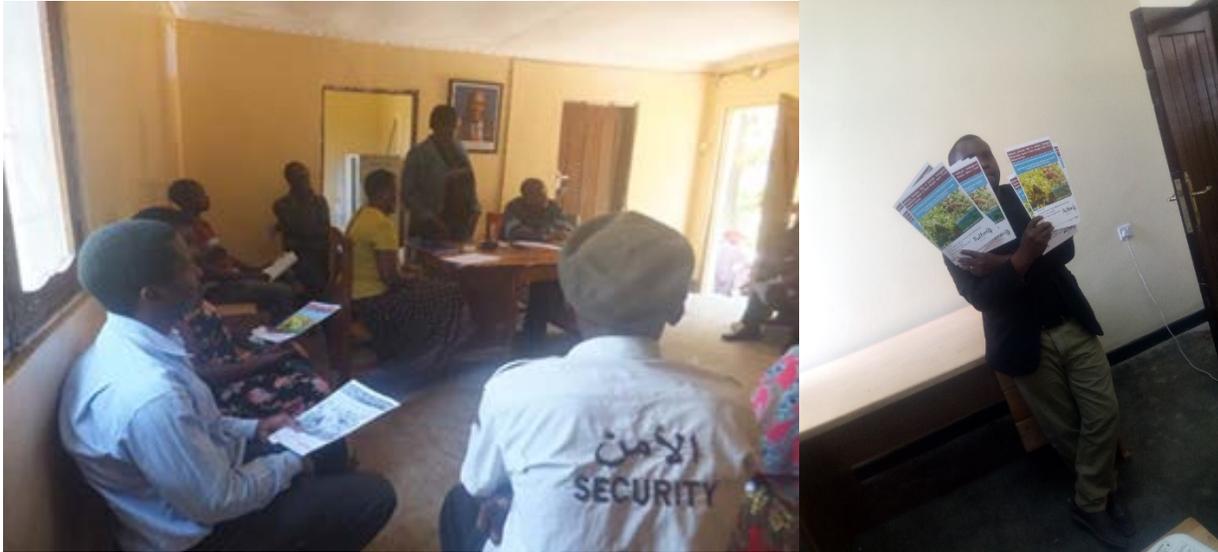
Materials and Methods

Posters showing Mount Rungwe Reserve and kipunji, and flip charts were used to facilitate learning. We used village meetings summoned by village leaders

Part of education offered	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Mount Rungwe reserve. • Importance of Mount Rungwe Forest Reserve on ecosystem services and communities' sustainable livelihoods • Introduction to environmental conservation • Advantages of environmental conservation 	Mr. Kazumari Mkwavila (TFS) Dr Fredrick Ojja (MUST) Mr. Erick Ngindo (KAESO) Mr. Lusekelo Silabi (MUST student)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of tourism and its importance to villages and community. • List of animals found in Mount Rungwe reserve • Negative impact of human activities e.g. environmental degradation on ecosystem services and communities' livelihoods 	Ms. Jessica Mgata (TFS) Dr Fredrick Ojja (MUST) Mr. Obadia R. Enock (TFS) Mr. Lusekelo Silabi (MUST student)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on human activities that contributes to the environmental degradation of the reserve. Responsibilities of villagers in conserving Mount Rungwe reserve and <i>R. kipunji</i> • Discussion about the factor threatening kipunji population • Conservation importance of <i>R. kipunji</i> • Challenges faced by villages along Mount Rungwe reserve. 	Ms. Grace Rugalema (MUST) Dr Fredrick Ojja (MUST) Mr. Lusekelo Silabi (MUST student) Mr. Kazumari Mkwavila (TFS) Mr. Maijo Peres (TAWIRI)

Pictures below show posters used as training materials during village meetings to aid local people learn and understand the importance of biodiversity conservation





Challenges

Most of the villages have common challenges such as animals from the reserve coming out and destroy farms, environmental committee do not have equipment that helps them in taking care of the reserve (raincoats, boots, fire beater, hoe, and pangas). Villages have bad roads and others have water problems.

Recommendations

Education on environmental conservation needs to be conducted regularly to the villages neighboring MRNFR. Direct or indirect benefits of the nature reserve need to be clear to the local communities as this may help to reduce the rate of environmental degradation and motivate them to conserve MRNFR and *R. kipunji*. Projects conducted in MRNFR should somehow benefits local people's livelihood as this will increase their collaboration with conservators.

The pictures below show different meetings held during conservation education campaign











REDUCING EXTINCTION RISK OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED *RUNGWECEBUS KIPUNJI* IN MOUNT RUNGWE NATURE FOREST RESERVE, TANZANIA



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Introduction

- Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve (MRNFR) in Tanzania, is a vital ecological area i.e.
- it protects rare and critically endangered spp e.g. *Rungwecebus kipunji*
- it provides habitats to native biota; and ecosystem services to local people (LP)
- However, its ecological integrity and *R. kipunji* are threatened due to forest degradation and hunting kipunji for food
- As a result, kipunji habitats in MRNFR have been deteriorating

Objectives

- To assess the population status of *R. kipunji* in MRNFR
- To assess the habitat suitability of *R. kipunji* in MRNFR
- To raise kipunji conservation awareness to local communities
- Promote *R. kipunji* conservation in collaboration with Tanzania Forest Service Agency and MRNFR authority



Figure 1. Shows the location of Mt Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve



Figure 2. *Rungwecebus kipunji*

Methods and Materials

Rungwecebus kipunji population survey

- Teams of 2–4 pairs of observers simultaneously search for *R. kipunji*
- Each team slowly and quietly walked while scanning the understorey and canopy, at 1–2 km h⁻¹ between 07.00 am and 18.30 pm

Assessing ecological habitats of *R. kipunji*

- Field surveys: *R. kipunji* ecological habitats condition
- Identify anthropogenic factors increasing species extinction risk

Raising awareness and promote *R. kipunji* conservation

- Via village meetings
- Educate local people in
- biodiversity/environmental conservation
- impact of forest degradation on kipunji population & human livelihoods

Results

- > 150 LP have received kipunji/habitats conservation education
- > 150 *R. kipunji* individuals have been counted in MRNFR
- Some LP hunt *R. kipunji* for food
- Limited conservation awareness among local people



Figure 2. Community conservation education.

Conclusions

- Kipunji and ecosystem health of MRNFR is threatened mainly by anthropogenic changes
- Conservation education to communities adjacent MRNFR is needed
- Local people should be involved in conservation of MRNFR



Acknowledgement

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