

Project Update: January 2016

Questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions have been completed. A total of 137 households in Malipati Communal Area, 75 households in Chomupani communal area and 35 households in the Gonakudzingwa small-scale commercial farming area were interviewed. A stratified random sampling design was used. There were socio-economic differences between the study sites in terms of gender of household head, wealth status, ethnicity and education levels. A total of 167 vernacular names of trees corresponding to 90 species were collected. The following use categories were recognised: human remedies, traditional veterinary remedies, livestock feed, firewood, timber and wild fruits. *C. mopane*, *C. imberbe* and *C. apiculatum* were some of the species frequently cited as useful in a number of categories. A higher diversity of non-timber forest products were utilised in Malipati closer to the park compared to the other two sites. Other ecosystem services that were cited as important were wind regulation, erosion control, shade provision and oxygen production with most also being mentioned in Malipati. Local perceptions of the park were strongly influenced by geographical location with those communities closer citing more benefits as compared to those farther from the park. Hence, it is evident that tree diversity and non-timber forest products do play a key role in poverty alleviation at the edge of Gonarezhou Park but this is influenced by socio-economic heterogeneity and geographic location, factors that need to be taken into account when designing and implementing natural resource management programmes at the edge of protected areas.



Left. Gregory, the Principal Investigator interviews a household head in Malipati Communal Area while the wife also assists.



Right. Villagers in Malipati Communal Area engage in a spirited discussion on the importance of conserving tree species as Gregory, the Principal Investigator (centre)



records the proceedings. **Note** how women were playing an active role in the discussions.

Left: A bowl of the dried Nyii fruit (*Berchemia discolor*) harvested and eaten as a sweet delicacy. This is one example of the provisioning services of the Mopane woodlands which need to be conserved.