

Project Update: July 2017

Thanks to the RSG for the Second Booster Grant that aims to monitor the bats of Mt Hoyo Forest Reserve and also assist the reserve to build sustainable conservation programmes by having its own management plan.

We planned to visit the reserve for some meetings and met with local chiefs to discuss issues related to the reserve viability since many of the areas are reluctant and the attempts to destabilise the rangers in the course of their work is the main problem. There has not been an incident but the rangers have rumours about it and are anxious because of the serious problems they are having in villages when poachers are arrested in the reserve.



Figure 1. A photograph of PK with Grand Chef Jerome Tabu Maguru of Gethy County.

The first trip took place from 22nd to 26th May 2017. The aim was to meet with the chief warden and the local chiefs as well as the Environment officer of the Itumu municipality for the Ituri Province. An appointment was also obtained to meet the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs.

To accomplish this, we requested to the chief warden to prepare everyone from the municipality to the Provincial Government, which he did. At our arrival, he met us at Bunia, the capital city of the Ituri Province where most of the activities took place.

Activities

1. Meet and discuss with the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs
2. Work with the Environment Officer for Itumu Municipality and the local chiefs whose land is surrounding the reserve.

Methods

1. With the provincial minister: meet him in his office and discuss as much as we could about the reserve
2. With the Grand Chef Tabu: have his agreement to meet with the local chiefs of his resort with or without him
3. With other local chiefs and stakeholders: have two days of discussions about the reserve viability and strategies to work out the management plan.

Outcomes

In the minister's office, all went well. He knew more about the reserve and had been involved in this matter for a while. He has sent a letter to ICCN Director General about the management plan and to plan a series of meetings with higher staff from ICCN to tackle the management issues of the reserve. In the absence of the Minister of Environmental Affairs (in a workshop outside the town), he left the interim to the Minister of Agriculture (see photo below).

During the course of the meeting, he decided to write another letter to the Director General of ICCN to remind the previous letter that he has not replied to make sure the process does not get stuck from ICCN which should be the first to raise the voice.

Meeting with Grand Chef Tabu Jerome: He is very receptive and understanding. The man was a teacher before he became the chief of the county on replacement of his father. Well educated, he is kind, quite and very well in working difficult matters.

He took time to listen our proposal of working with the local stakeholders and chiefs on the management plan of the reserve. It turns out that many of the problems the reserve faces are related to the management. But in absence of tourism, there is no revenue raised from the reserve that can be shared. Security being the main issue here, it is impossible to sensitise peoples from all over (outside the country or inside) for tourism.

A discussion by phone with the governor, they agreed that the governor is eager to visit the sites and see what the province can do. He also mentioned his intention to visit the reserve and work to sensitise local people and businessmen to start a tour business that can also take people to the reserve to get funds that can be managed by all parties.

The last group to meet was the local chiefs and other stakeholders:

Two day meetings were held where discussions took place.

Among resolutions:

- When possible, ICCN should make efforts to enrol some people from the eastern side of the reserve as rangers and establish a patrol post in this side of the reserve (pending funding);
- ICCN need to intensify patrols with some local peoples to show them the main caves that they can visit all the time to avoid vandalism or poaching in the caves;
- Local peoples (chiefs and civil society) must work together with ICCN to sensitise the population on the importance of bats and the problems that bats can cause (or have caused) to humans.
- ICCN need to work with the army to patrol in some sensitive areas of the reserve to avoid to get in trouble in this part that has many active armed groups.



Left: The Minister Joseph NDIA (centre) of Agriculture at Grand Chief Tabu Jerome with PK and one of his Interim for his colleague of Environmental Affairs with notabilities. Right: Some of his visitors (Honoré BALIKWISHA, the chief warden at the right, PK at the left).



Left: The team during the workshop (right, the civil society. Right: During the workshop, leading discussion activist, who acted as the MC.



Notabilities: Jacques Mwanga (centre), Environment officer. Deans of the local chiefs - most (Jean), School Principal and deputy chief (second right).



The secretary of the Grand Chef Tabu, representing him and taking notes for the meetings.