

Project Update: February 2019

Introduction.

The project Principal Investigator (PI) and the IPR Conservation Department team visited Tana River Primate National Reserve (TRPNR) in February 2019. This field visit was in line with the first objective which was to conduct a pre-visit to the project site and create a data collection tool. The activities were to; i). Identify and select research assistants from the villages; ii). Conduct training of research assistants and local team members. This objective formed the first part of the Rufford Foundation-funded project '*Minimizing utilization of forest resources to enhance conservation of Tana River Mangabey (Cercocebus galeritus), Tana River County, Kenya, 2019*'. The aim of the field visit was to conduct a reconnaissance to introduce the project to the community, train local assistant on questionnaire document, editing and testing it. Also, to meet the local administration within the project area.

Achievements

Within this period, 5 local assistants were trained on data collection filling the questionnaire and take through the questionnaire form to suggest any edits on forest utilization. We managed to meet 2 local chiefs who represented the areas covered by the project and they were taken through the activities and objective of the project and were receptive with the idea due to the increased impacts climate change in the area and the need to conserve the remaining forest habitats in the area.

During the process of meeting the chief and explaining the details of the project, we observed a new trend on the utilization of the *Hyphaene compressa* seeds where they are packed in bags/sacks. Upon enquiring from the local people, we were informed that the seeds are used as an alternative to charcoal in the major towns in the coastal region and this started in the wake of countrywide burn of charcoal burning which created the demand.



Plate 1: *Hyphaene compressa* nuts collected and packed ready for transportation. The dried pulp from the nuts is fed on by the Tana River mangabey during the dry season when food is scarce.



Plate 2: The IPR Conservation Department team led by Dr. Kivai and Charles K. Maingi (PI) after holding a meeting with the local administration representatives from Baomo and Wenje areas. **Plate 3:** The IPR conservation Department team led by Charles Maingi (PI) and Dr. S. M. Kivai taking through the local assistants on the questionnaire document and gathering their views prior to data collection.

Conclusion

The team met the local area administration and trained the local community assistants who will help in the data collection in the second part of the project. The team observed a new trend in the use of the palm *Hyphaene compressa* nuts which is threatening the soil seed bank in the forest and its regeneration.