### Project Update: February 2021

#### Introduction

Rungwe-Livingstone forests have been poorly managed leading to heavy fragmentation and loss of biodiversity. Although the mountains accommodate almost 93% of the Kipunii population, the mountains have been severely degraded due to unmanaged resource extraction activities conducted by community members such as change in land use for agriculture, charcoal burning, hunting and logging (Davenport et al., 2005, 2006). In order to secure population of Kipunji and improve conservation, Mount Rungwe forest was upgraded as nature forest reserve in 2009 (Bracebridge et al., 2011). According to IUCN, Kipunji is being used as a 'flagship species' by WCS's long-term Southern Highlands Conservation Program in and around Rungwe-Livingstone, especially in education and awareness raising activities, and as part of a long-term monitoring programme (IUCN, 2019). It is further documented that education and awareness (formal education, training, awareness and communications) are the needed conservation actions to be implemented (IUCN, 2019). This study, therefore, aimed at mapping the current distribution patterns of the species, to assess the threats, community awareness and create conservation awareness among community who also have shown to play a big role on the influence of Kipunji existence.

### 1.0 Introduction of the project to stakeholders and reconnaissance survey

The project was introduced to Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS) at Rungwe offices, village chairperson and village executive officers of the village's surrounding Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve (plate1). The stakeholders where introduced the aim of the project and how the project will be conducted and the benefits the project will bring to the society. Furthermore, reconnaissance survey was conducted on villages bordering Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve to identify villages for conducting questionnaire.





Plate 1: Introduction of the project to stakeholders and reconnaissance survey @ Scholastica Mbinile

### 2.0 To map distribution patterns of R. kipunji

Data were collected through transect (survey roots following trails and human track) and opportunistic sightings. Priority of the survey was given to areas where Kipunji was already suspected to be found through knowledge from literature review, local knowledge, habitat type and altitude. Following that, six villages (Ilolo, Bujingijila, Syukula, Ndala, Ilundo and Kabale) were selected during reconnaissance and surveyed for distribution patterns. Areas where the habitat and altitudes does not favor the existence of Kipunji as in reference to previously literature were given less priority for surveying. The survey started from 0645 to 1800 hrs. and paused between 1230 and 1430 hrs. The walking distance covered at least 1-2 km/h. Five minutes maximum was spent to evaluate individuals encountered until satisfied with the identification. During walking, *R. kipunji* faeces, individual sighting, nests, spoor signs and vocalisation were assessed and recorded (Plate 2). Moreover, binoculars and GPS handheld devices was used for easy visualisation and coordinates recording respectively. In addition, data like site ID, site GPS coordinates, transect number, GPS coordinates of each sighting was collected.





Plate 2: Distribution study of *R. kipunji* around selected areas at Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve @ Warda Kanagwa & Scholastica Mbinile

### 2.1 To assess the threats facing R. kipunji

Following the transects during distribution patterns data collection, the threats facing *R*. *kipunji* (like logging, charcoal burning, any signs of poaching, encroachment and any other anthropogenic disturbances) were identified (Plate 3) and GPS coordinate were recorded. Furthermore, focus group discussion and household questionnaires was conducted to determine the threats (Plate 4).





Plate 3: The identified anthropogenic threats that faces R. kipunji at Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve @Warda Kanagwa



Plate 4: Focus group discussion with stakeholders @Scholastica Mbinile

# 3.0 Challenges

- Poor infrastructure facilities (roads and availability of electricity) (Plate 5).
- Remoteness of the areas.
- Excessive rains.
- Language barrier.



Plate 5: Roughness of the roads around the study sites @Scholastica Mbinile & Warda Kanagwa

# 4.0 Current step

Assessing community awareness on conservation of Kipunji.

# 5.0 Next steps

- Data analysis.
- Result dissemination and community awareness creation.
- Manuscript preparation.