

Project Update: December 2022

Wildlife management is important to balance both the needs of people as well as the needs of wildlife and is a key component in efforts to ensure the conservation, sustainable use and access and management of associated benefits and services derived from biodiversity. Many wildlife species including chimpanzees are under threat and listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List. The root cause is anthropogenic activities due to the lack of alternatives, poor knowledge of surrounding communities and lack of awareness. This is why in this phase of our project implementation, we have been conducting series of activities for the sustainable conservation of the eastern chimpanzees of Nyungwe National Park, raising awareness its surrounding communities and improving their livelihoods.

Below are the activities we have carried out:

Meeting with the Executive Secretaries of the sectors and cells in which our project is being carried out:

Prior to our project implementation, we have met with the Executive Secretaries of the sectors and cells in which this project is being carried out. We had a productive meeting as we were exchanging ideas about how this project can bring a long-term impact in line with the sustainable conservation of the eastern chimpanzees of the park and leveraging the communities adjacent to the park.



Group photo after the meeting with the Executives Secretaries

Awareness Raising campaigns on biodiversity conservation, chimpanzees' threats, conservation and their ecological importance and the park.

During the awareness raising campaigns, we have met with different community groups, and we have conducted various series of awareness raising campaigns about the importance of the eastern chimpanzees and the other park's wildlife in general, threats they face and how to overcome them. We were also reminding the attendees how everyone should play a key role in protecting the eastern chimpanzees of Nyungwe National Park and its biodiversity through reporting whoever seen threatening the park's biodiversity to strengthen the law enforcement. The communities got the opportunity to ask different questions they had and got answers from the researchers. They were telling us about different illegal cases they heard or seen, and they felt sad they didn't report these to the authorities. After these awareness raising sessions, they promised us to take the initiative of reporting whoever seen threatening the park and its biodiversity. They also promised us to spread the message among their family members, friends and neighbors who didn't have a chance to be part of the sessions.



Awareness raising campaigns with different community groups

We have also had awareness-raising campaigns in different schools where after the sessions we have conducted different greening activities such as cleaning the school compounds. The students were eager to learn how eastern chimpanzees are ecologically important as the majority knew that their main importance was to generate revenues from tourism. They were also reminded that among the threats that the chimpanzees and the park in general are facing now, the majority are anthropogenic based, and they decided to become the advocates of the park and its biodiversity for its sustainable conservation as this will be a win-win long term solution for the sustainable conservation of the park's biodiversity and the human well-being at the same time.

Training within various community groups was carried out where we found that the trainees had some basic knowledge about the importance of preserving biodiversity where the majority was emphasising about rain and oxygen provision, generating income from tourism as the main importance of the park and its wildlife. This was a good opportunity for us to remind the participants that biodiversity has much tremendous ecological importance for our well being and it can improve our

livelihoods once well preserved. We also reminded them how we threaten biodiversity while we are the first to depend on and benefit from it. The trainees also got to know various threats that the park's wildlife face and how to overcome them and live in harmony with wildlife.

After this activity, we conducted the competitions where the winners received the awards. The competitions were a good way to assess the level of understanding of the students, checking how they digested what they were taught in schools and during awareness-raising campaigns. It is very impressive to hear how students were confidently debating about the importance of biodiversity and how they were able to support their arguments. These competitions were also a good channel for students to showcase their talents and deliver their message through their talents.





Activities with the students: Awareness raising campaigns and competitions among the students



Community campaigns and trainings