

Project Updates: November 2023

1. Introduction

This is an update on the project that aimed at addressing human-primate conflicts and fostering co-existence between humans and primates in the villages around Ntakata forest, in western Tanzania. Ntakata forest is a crucial habitat for enormous wildlife species including primates (i.e., chimpanzees, vervet monkeys, baboons, red-tailed monkeys, red colobus monkeys/ashy red colobus monkeys, and blue monkeys), elephants, leopards, buffalo, endemic birdlife and butterflies. Despite its rich biodiversity, encroachment on the forest through various human activities such as farming and logging have greatly reduced the forest size leading to loss of primate's habitats. Subsequently, the condition has resulted in conflicts between humans and primates when primates damage or feed from the cultivated crops in vicinity of the forest. Thus, this project's goal was to address challenges associated with human-primates conflict, promote co-existence between humans and primates, and promote conservation of Ntakata forest. To achieve the project goal, the following activities were conducted in the villages directly bordering to Ntakata forest; (1) educate the local communities about primates and sustainable utilization of wildlife resources, (2) address human behaviour factors influencing human-primate conflicts, (3) educate farmers to farm more intensively and effectively in selected areas and spare more natural land on primate populations, (4) promote cultivation of primates' unpalatable crops, (5) discourage primate meat consumption, (6) explore alternative sources of human livelihoods, and (7) perform project evaluation and disseminate the project results. Below is a detailed description of the activities performed to achieve the desired project outputs:

(a) Educate the local communities about primates and sustainable use of wildlife

We conducted workshops and meetings in four targeted villages around Ntakata forest. The workshops and meetings involved the village government officials (i.e., village chairmen and village executive officers), various farmers whom their farms are close to Ntakata forest, village game scouts (VGS), and Ward agricultural extension officer. During the workshops/meetings, we raised awareness on the importance of conserving primates' and highlighted on the potential benefits of sustainable wildlife utilization. Information about the primate species inhabiting Ntakata forest were disclosed to the local communities. The project team also emphasized the significance of conserving primates alongside other biodiversity as they play vital roles in the ecosystem and eco-tourism. Further, the local communities were informed about the IUCN conservation status of the primate species living in Ntakata forest with focus on ashy-red colobus monkeys and chimpanzees which are both endangered species. Knowing the IUCN conservation status of the species, increased awareness of the need and urgency to conserve the species among the local communities.



Plate 1: Workshop participants in Ikubulu Village



Plate 2: Workshop participants in Mgambazi Village



Plate 3: Workshop participants group picture in some of the visited village (Left: Ikubulu, Right: Mgambazi)

On the other hand, we visited various primary and secondary schools found within the project area. In the schools we provided education through presentations and talks to raise students' awareness and understanding about primates and provided reasons on why primates should be conserved and how. Education on the role of primates in ecotourism as well as ecosystem services was highly stressed during presentations. Moreover, school children were taught comprehensively about the effects and dangers of consuming primates as protein sources. By passing wildlife conservation knowledge on

to young generations in schools and raising their awareness about primate conservation, is anticipated to yield positive results in the long-term.



Plate 4: Some of the secondary school students that were visited during the implementation of the project activities.



Plate 5: Some of the primary school pupils that were visited during the implementation of the project activities.

(b) Address human behavior factors influencing human-primate conflict

During meetings and workshops, we conducted an open discussion with the local communities. The discussions delved into the complexities of human-primate conflicts, exploring root causes and potential mitigation strategies. Moreover, we educated the local communities on the importance of co-habitation and adopting practices that minimize conflicts between humans and primates. Suggested practices include cultivating unpalatable crops and venturing on other alternative socio-economic activities (i.e., beekeeping and aquaculture).



Plate 6: Some of the local community members sharing their views during an open discussion

(c) Educate farmers to farm more intensively and effectively in selected areas and spare more natural land on primate populations

Here the project team focused on promoting sustainable farming practices. One of the key drivers of human-primate conflicts in the villages around Ntakata forest is the competition for resources, particularly the cultivated crops in agricultural areas located near primate habitats. To mitigate this situation, it was imperative to explore some of the applicable approaches that are socially and economically viable based on the existing condition in the target villages. Following this, the local communities were advised to practice the so-called smart farming or climate-smart agriculture. The team insisted on agroforestry practices and farming more intensively and effectively in selected areas and spare more natural land for primate populations and other wildlife species. By adopting these practices, farmers will eventually minimize encroachment on primate habitats and reduce the likelihood of crop-raiding incidences.

(d) Promote cultivation of primates' unpalatable crops

Unpalatable crops can act as barriers to crop damage or raids by primates. We reached farmers whose farms are in close proximity to Ntakata forest and insisted them to cultivate crops that are unpalatable to primates. Cultivation of unpalatable has the potential to significantly contribute to mitigating human-primate conflicts because primates often invade farmlands in search of food, leading to crop losses and conflicts between humans and wildlife. Through planting crops that are less appealing to primates, the farmers will greatly reduce the likelihood of primate intrusion into their farms and damage or raid the cultivated food crops. Crops such as ginger, onions, and chili peppers were highly recommended for cultivation as their market value is high compared to traditional crops like maize. The recommended crops can yield more profits compared to traditional ones. For instance, ginger, onions, and chili peppers are currently highly demanded locally and internationally due to their versatile uses in different cuisines and industries. Farmers can tap into profitable market opportunities by growing these crops and improve their economic outcomes. Further, the local communities were advised to plant timber trees and coffee because the environment highly supports growing them.

(e) Educate people of the dangers of wild primate meat consumption

The local communities were also informed about the health risks associated with handling wild primate meat including the possibility of disease transmission. Moreover, alternative protein sources were suggested to the local communities, such as poultry and fish farming to reduce reliance on bushmeat.



Plate 7: A participatory class with primary school pupils when teaching and discussing the potential health risks and effects of primate meat consumption or bushmeat.

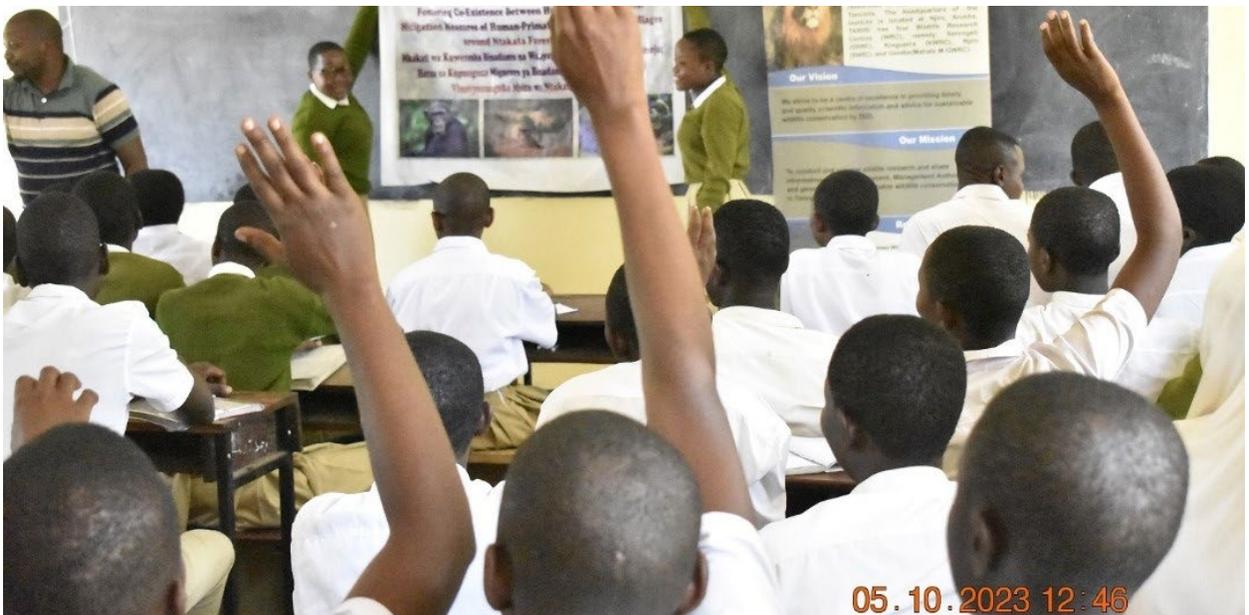


Plate 8: A participatory class with secondary school students when teaching on the potential health risks and effects of primate meat consumption or bushmeat.

(f) Explore on the alternative source of human livelihood with the potential of promoting human-primate co-existence and safeguarding the Ntakata forest

The project team informed the local communities about other potential socio-economic activities that can be practiced in their villages. Through field survey in the village areas and area close to Ntakata forest, it was revealed that beekeeping and aquaculture can perform very well. If appropriately practiced, beekeeping and aquaculture can provide additional income and promote biodiversity conservation, especially in the villages around Ntakata forest. For example, beekeeping products such as honey and other bee products have high market value, both locally and internationally. Similarly, fish farming can provide a sustainable source of protein, generate income, and contribute to food security. Both of these activities have high market demand, making them potentially profitable ventures for farmers and villagers.

(g) Project evaluation and dissemination of the project results

To really capture the project outcomes, monitoring and evaluation of the implemented project activities is of importance. This activity normally spans beyond the project duration. Thus, the project team members will keep monitoring and evaluating the performance of the project. On the other hand, the project team members will be disseminating the project outcomes to the key stakeholders alongside monitoring and evaluation activity.

2. Conclusion

The project's approaches have shown promising results in reducing human-primate conflicts and raising awareness about the importance of primate conservation. However, ongoing monitoring and continuous community engagement are crucial to ensure the long-term success of these efforts.

3. Recommendations

Based on this project's findings, the following are recommended:

- (i) Continue community education and awareness programs to maintain a high level of understanding and support for primate conservation.
- (ii) Strengthen collaboration with local farmers and provide ongoing training and technical support to promote sustainable farming practices.
- (iii) Advocate for stricter law enforcement and regulations related to hunting and illegal wildlife trade.
- (iv) Generate income through eco-tourism activities and sustainable forest business like carbon credit.
- (v) Establish a long-term monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of human-primate co-existence initiatives and identify areas for improvement.

By implementing the suggested recommendations, the project can contribute significantly to the conservation of primate populations in Ntakata forest and promote sustainable development in local communities.