

Project update June 2023

The principal investigator (PI) travelled to Kom-Wum Forest Reserve on the 10th May 2023. He organised conservation education and bee farming training workshops with hunters, farmers, children, and other non-timber forest product collectors of the Bu, Mbengkas, and Baiso village communities surrounding the reserve (Figure 1a-b). Additionally, in-depth discussions were held with the Fon of each village and with some key community members who have lived in the villages for more than 10 years to improve conservation awareness (Figure 1c-d).



Figure 1: Conservation education workshops with children, farmers, and hunters of Mbengkas village (a&b), and awareness campaigns with the Fon of Mbengkas (c) and key community members of Bu village (d&e).

During the workshops, hunters and farmers were trained in constructing the Kenyan top bar beehives (Figure 2a&b). In total, 95 community members (22 hunters and 73 farmers) were trained on the new bee farming technique which is not commonly practised by community members surrounding the Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. Ten hunters and 33 farmers were trained in Bu, eight hunters and 24 farmers in Mbengkas, and four hunters and 16 farmers in Baiso villages. Four bee suits and three smokers were offered to bee farmers to use as a group (Figure 2c). One chimpanzee conservation club (made up of mostly hunters) and a bee farmers association were created per village. The hunters were offered t-shirts with alert messages to stop the hunting of chimpanzees and the consumption of bushmeat. One Community Initiative Group (CIG) was created per village consisting of hunters and bee farmers in the three

selected villages. These CIG'S will be registered in the town of Wum before December 2023.



Figure 2: The PI trains hunters (a) and farmers (b) in constructing the Kenyan top bar beehive in Baiso and donates bee suites and smokers to bee farmers (c) and hunters (d) in Bu village.



Figure 3: Conservation awareness campaigns with a) the PI posting a poster in a bar, b) a community member posting a poster in a church, c) a calendar posted in the Fon's palace, and d) a poster posted in the Baiso village square.

After the conservation awareness and bee training workshops, the Fon of each village selected two hunters, two farmers, and two children to assist the PI in posting 30 posters

(at least 10 per village) in churches, health centres, Fons Palace, schools, and village square (Figure 3a-d).

More posters and flyers were posted in restaurants in the town of Wum where bushmeat was reported to be sold (Figure 4). Flyers were stuck to drinking cups to prevent the users from throwing the flyers away after reading the alert messages. Additionally, t-shirts with alert messages to stop the consumption of chimpanzee meat were shared with restaurant owners to improve conservation awareness.



Figure 4: A chimpanzee club member sharing posters, T-shirts, and cups with alert messages to stop hunting and consuming chimpanzee meat in restaurants in the town of Wum.

The selected hunters and some traditional council members also assisted PI in installing 12 educational signboards (Figure 5). Four signboards were installed per village (two at strategic locations in the respective villages and the remaining two at reserve boundaries).

Fourteen improved breeds of piglet pairs (boar and sow) were purchased and provided to 14 hunters who already have pigs in their farms for breeding (five in Bu, five in Mbengkas and four in Baiso, Figure 6). The remaining piglet pair was donated to a female farmer in Baiso to start pig farmers since there are only four hunters in this village. Overall, 30 piglets have been donated to hunters in the selected villages. The growth of the piglets will be monitored and hunters who have received piglets are expected to donate new-borns to another poor deserving farmer by the 17th of March 2024.



Figure 5: Conservation awareness campaigns with the PI a) planting an educational signboard at the reserve boundaries, b) planting signboards with traditional council members of Baiso village, c) planting a signboard with chimpanzee conservation club members in Bu village, and e) planting signboards with a member of the chimpanzee conservation club in Mbengkas village.



Figure 6: Piglets pair donated to hunters of a) Bu and b) Mbengkas villages.