

Capacity Building, Awareness-Raising, and Sensitization for Conservation of *U. puguensis*

Community meetings were organized by village executive officers to raise awareness, sensitize, and build capacity within local communities regarding the conservation of the Pugu Forest Reserve (PFR) and *Uvaria puguensis*. These meetings emphasized the ecological and cultural importance of *U. puguensis* and the urgent need to safeguard the species through both in-situ and ex-situ conservation. Two educational sessions were conducted in each community surrounding the reserve, ensuring broad participation and equitable access to conservation education.

The training and capacity-building sessions were delivered jointly by the project team, village executive officers, and Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) staff. Local community members received practical training on best practices for conserving *U. puguensis* in the wild as well as techniques for propagation within their private forests and farms. This approach ensured that conservation knowledge could be directly applied to both community-managed and household-level landscapes, thereby reducing pressure on wild populations.

To better understand community perspectives, semi-structured questionnaires and focus group discussions were employed. These tools allowed the project team to assess local awareness, document attitudes toward conservation, and evaluate willingness to adopt propagation practices. Insights from these discussions are now informing the development of more tailored outreach and conservation strategies.

Our community engagement strategy was structured around five core pillars:

1. Empowerment and stewardship – Encouraging local people to act as custodians of *U. puguensis*, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility that is critical for long-term conservation success.
2. Capacity building – Strengthening skills in sustainable conservation practices, including species propagation, habitat management, and monitoring techniques, to enable meaningful community participation.
3. Monitoring and evaluation – Establishing mechanisms for regular assessment of both species status and community involvement, ensuring adaptive management and early response to emerging threats.

4. Collaboration with local authorities – Building strong partnerships with local government structures, village leaders, and conservation organizations to sustain momentum and ensure institutional support for ongoing conservation initiatives.



Figure 1: Training to build capacity and raise awareness about conservation of *U. puguensis*

5. Public Awareness Campaigns – Conducting outreach through workshops, community events, and educational materials to highlight the importance of conserving *U. puguensis* and to promote continued participation across all age groups, including youth and women.

Through this integrated approach, local communities are not only beneficiaries of conservation education but also active participants and partners in securing the future of *U. puguensis* and the ecological integrity of the Pugu Forest Reserve.



Figure 2: Training to build capacity and raise awareness about conservation of *U. puguensis*