

Proposal to CEEPF 65708: Designing Management and Monitoring Plans for the Livingstone Mountain Forests

Social Assessment of local communities

The project will work with communities adjacent to the targeted forest reserves of Madenge, Mdandu, Mshola and Sakaranyumo. The majority of these community members use the reserves for food, medicines, building materials and income. The mountains and forests of this region are also vital to national and local economies through soil conservation and water catchments which influence the livelihoods of a quarter of the country's population. There are 6 main ethnic groups in the Southern Highlands, the majority of whose livelihoods are subsistence-based, consisting of a mixture of agriculture and pastoralism. The area is known as the "bread basket" of Tanzania, due to the fertile volcanic soil and plentiful rainfall producing high agricultural outputs. In Mbeya region, the mountains are home to the Safwa and Nyakyusa people, both traditionally farming communities, although the Safwa also hunt quite extensively. Smaller farming ethnic groups in Mbeya region are the Wanda and Nyamwanga, who farm in the lowland areas towards Malawi and Zambia. In Njombe region's Kipengere mountains, the Bena dominate with >800,000 people, while the smaller Kinga community resides around the Livingstone mountains – both groups practice arable and pastoral agriculture.

In this area, the issue of "indigenoussness" is not an issue per se, and certainly Tanzanian law and the constitution reflects equality to all Tanzanians regardless of ethnic background. All groups are of Bantu origin and have such similar dialects that most can understand neighbouring dialects conversantly. The more salient consideration in the communities is to reach both disadvantaged (such as disabled, those who can't read and write, children) and advantaged groups, and we strive to achieve this within the project.

Consultation

Consultation was conducted at village level, district level and with higher authorities that work with forests (Tanzania Forest Services).

1. WCS conducted socio economic surveys to determine the dependency on the forest by the communities living adjacent to it. The survey was conducted in September 2008 and 150 households were involved. The communities depended and still depend on the forest for fuel wood, meat, medicinal plants and building materials.
2. An awareness introductory meeting was conducted in 2008 with the communities and the districts to share the importance of the forest for biodiversity (especially endemic primates, herptiles and plants) and for water catchments, and to explain the value of managing the forests well as protected areas. This message was also communicated to Tanzania Forest Services. Both communities and Tanzania Forest Services were supportive and are looking forward to seeing the management of the forest implemented and their natural resources conserved for a sustainable future.