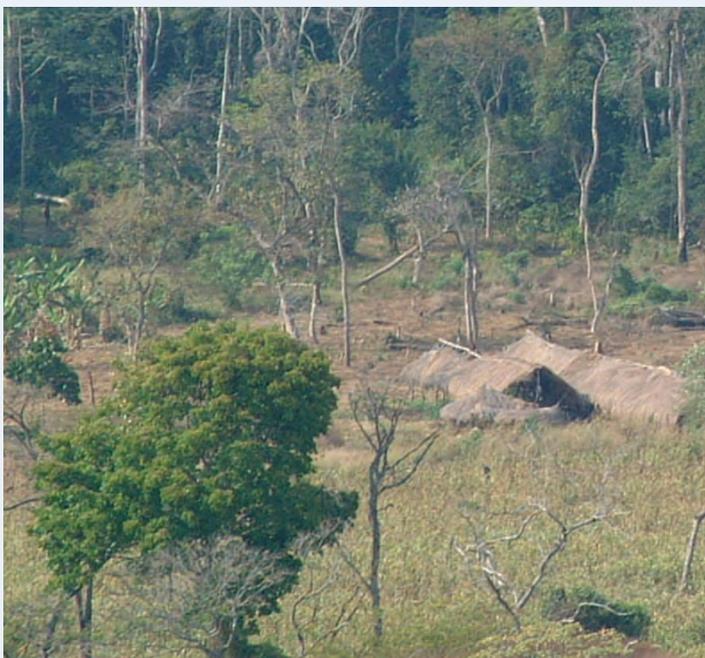## Background

Albertine Rift is home to over 1100 endemic plant and animal species, and has more registered species of birds and amphibians than any other part of Africa. At the northern tip of the rift, east of Lake Albert, lies Murchison-Semuliki Landscape, one of the last remaining forested regions of Uganda. The Murchison-Semuliki archipelago of forests shelter populations of endangered species such as the chimpanzee, crowned eagle, and small forest carnivores such as the golden cat and black-backed jackal.

The Murchison-Semuliki Landscape is also home to an estimated 1.7 million people who depend on these natural resources. 58% of these forests (113,466 ha) are privately owned by small holders and form essential wildlife corridors between the public forests (forest reserves). Between 2006 and 2010 over 8000 hectares have been cleared each year for agriculture, fuel wood and timber. Food scarcity is already a permanent phenomenon in the Landscape and most of these smallholders risk reaching a poverty trap over the next 10 year when they run out of forest to clear for cultivation.

About WCS

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and partners are implementing the Murchison-Semliki REDD+ project which is situated in western Uganda east of Lake Albert. The REDD plus project helps to mitigate global climate change and conserve the forests and wildlife of the Murchison-Semuliki Landscape by strengthening the management capacity of the farmers and providing access to more profitable markets. The Northern Albertine Rift Conservation Group (NARCG) and the government of Uganda (GOU) are carrying out activities designed to address the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the Landscape. Project activities include: conservation farming and business saving groups.

NARCG aims to create a win-win situation for poor households and biodiversity by promoting an ecosystem-based adaptation strategy which will result in:

Reduced rates of deforestation and habitat conversion

The current rate of deforestation on private lands is detrimental for both PFOs and wildlife in the region, including chimpanzees, grey crowned cranes, and other endemic species that have been experiencing population declines. This project aims to drastically reduce rates of deforestation, helping to conserve 16,000 ha of forest and wetland in Hoima that include crucial corridors integral to the well-being of humans and biodiversity.

Increased climate change resilience

Resilience to climate change will increase through the introduction of climate-smart conservation farming techniques that will lead to more reliable crop yield, as well as through the conservation of forests and wetlands that act as buffers to help mitigate extreme weather events.

Poverty reduction and improved livelihood security

Poverty will be reduced among residents of the 13 focal parishes through new conservation farming techniques that will increase yield, thereby reducing food insecurity and providing surplus for sale. This surplus will help increase cash income, especially as stronger and more direct links to end and wholesale buyers is established.

Better access to capital

Connecting rural farmers to microcredit opportunities will allow them to develop additional sources of income through activities such as beekeeping and fruit tree cultivation. It will also allow them to borrow emergency money in order to meet basic economic needs, which will in turn reduce the tree cutting.

It is anticipated that the Project will prevent an emission of 41.2 million tonnes of CO2e going into the atmosphere from privately owned forests and an additional 20.8 million tonnes of CO2e from public forests over a project life time of 30 years, improve the livelihoods of rural communities and reduce their risk of reaching a poverty trap, and saving threatened wildlife. WCS will keep you updated on its role to contributing to a cleaner environment in consequent bulletins.