

## Press release

### **Conservation leader from Tanzania wins 2016 Whitley Award**

#### **Prize awarded for community conservation of coastal forests in the greater Selous Ecosystem**

**London, UK: 27 April 2016** – HRH The Princess Royal on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017 presented a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Makala Jasper at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work in Tanzania to empower communities to conserve coastal forests and their wildlife through the sustainable management and sale of the high value timber, African Blackwood(also known as mpingo).

As Director of the Mpingo Conservation Development Initiative, Makala has assisted 35 communities to protect over 3,000km<sup>2</sup> of forest. The project is Africa's only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified programme for community-managed natural forests. Since the programme was established in 2006, prices per log have increased 100-fold providing vital income to people earning less than US\$1 per day.

The project is situated between two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Selous Game Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in Africa, and Kilwa Kisiwani. By linking forest fragments, the project is enabling seasonal movements of large mammals such as elephants and lions. Through this initiative, Makala is giving communities an incentive to conserve this important habitat and the biodiversity within it. Makala's Whitley Award will allow him to bring over 5,000km<sup>2</sup> of coastal forest under community protection, benefitting 2,500 Tanzanians.

Edward Whitley, Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: "WFN focuses on conservation success stories and the progress that's being made. The Awards Ceremony is about recognising and celebrating that – winning those small battles which cumulatively add up to significant change at the national level. In addition to the financial benefit of winning an Award, our winners receive professional communications training to turn scientists into ambassadors, so they're able to communicate what they're doing to the public and to policy makers."