

Bushmeat and Poverty

**A speech by Clare Short, Secretary of State
for International Development**

**UK Bushmeat Campaign Conference
at The Zoological Society of London**

28 May 2002

Bushmeat and Poverty

**A speech by Clare Short, Secretary of State
for International Development**

**UK Bushmeat Campaign Conference
at The Zoological Society of London**

28 May 2002

Before I come to the question of bushmeat, it is important that I make clear the reason for my Department's engagement in this issue and the perspective we bring to this work.

One in five of the six billion people who share our planet are living in abject poverty. Most of them are eking out their existence in difficult marginal environments with few government services, particularly health and education. They live a life subject to constant malnutrition and disease and are constantly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. They and their children struggle to survive and despite working harder and more creatively than most other people on the planet they have fewer opportunities to improve their lives or hope that their children will live to see a better future.

The Department for International Development (DFID) exists in order to mobilize a more intensive and effective international effort to systematically reduce this poverty. To this end we have worked to get all parts of the international system – including the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries – committed to the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals – which were agreed at the UN Millennium Assembly and include halving the proportion of people in poverty, getting all children into school, reducing infant, child and maternal mortality and reversing the loss of environmental resources by 2015.

Our primary goal, and the measure by which we judge our impact, is poverty reduction. Thus we are strongly committed to supporting sustainable development. But we mean sustainable development. Too often in the part past the environmental movement in the OECD countries has focused on conservation of animals and forests and taken little account of the needs of poor people whose lives depend on these resources. In DFID we believe we cannot achieve sustainable development unless we are

genuinely committed to the reduction of poverty. Thus the sustainable use of natural resources including wildlife and reversing environmental degradation are DFID priorities where they will have a clear impact on poor people's lives. But it must be clear to all who work with us that we are a development and not a conservation agency and that sustainable development which systematically reduces poverty is our mission.

Some examples of our work might help to spell out how these agendas overlap. My first example is the support we give to government and civil society initiatives in developing countries to help communities combat illegal logging and manage their forest resources more sustainably. Our work in the Cameroon for example, suggests that bushmeat supplies, which contribute to the food and livelihoods of many thousands of poor people, are in decline across large areas because of illegal logging and unsustainable harvesting. DFID has supported the implementation of community forestry laws that give local people the rights to manage their own forest and wildlife resources, including bushmeat, as part of our programme to improve forest management. We support similar forestry programmes in Indonesia, Nepal, Guyana and other places.

My second example is our support for government and non governmental organisation (NGO) sponsored community wildlife management initiatives in Tanzania and Namibia, which enable poor people living in marginal areas to make the most out of their wildlife assets by developing tourism and related businesses. In the Tanzania work, for example, 19 villages now receive more than two thirds of communal village income from wildlife – and this includes issuing licenses for hunting – which has enabled them to fund village infrastructure projects and reduce village taxes. These projects help transfer rights and tenure to local people, empowering the poor to participate more directly in building their own development opportunities. We also support a number of joint ventures between the private sector, and local communities for wildlife tourism development through the Business Linkages Challenge Fund.

And third, we are mid-way through a study of the linkages between wildlife and poverty and the implications for development agencies. We know that the linkages are complex. Many poor people depend on wildlife as a source of food and livelihoods, and wildlife habitat protection can safeguard key environmental services such as water and soil quality. However, human-wildlife conflict is growing too, with crop raiding and hunting of livestock taking a large toll on the livelihoods of many poor people. And it should be noted that wildlife conservation through protected area systems continues to be resisted by poor people who are denied access and use rights in such areas.

So now we must ask ourselves, how important is bushmeat to the lives of poor people? The informal, and often illegal, nature of bushmeat harvesting and consumption makes the nature and scale of poverty linkages less than clear. Bushmeat appears to play some role in the lives of many poor people in both forest and savannah areas. It appears to be more important in times of stress, such as famine, drought and economic hardship. But there's a lot that we do not know. Bushmeat research has tended to approach the issues from a perspective of species conservation rather than the needs of poor people. Research tends to be better at estimating levels of destruction of wildlife – such as the often-published figure of between one and five million tonnes of bushmeat harvested each year from the Congo Basin – than assessing the role of the trade on the livelihoods of poor people.

We are therefore currently funding poverty-focused bushmeat research in Ghana, which we plan to extend to other countries. In Ghana, as in the Cameroon, bushmeat supplies are already heavily depleted. In northeastern Ghana, for example, relatively few people were found to be dependent on bushmeat for their livelihood. Loss to livelihoods has been a gradual process, and poor people have adapted to this loss, with a few hunters even saying that as animals have become scarcer, prices and returns have improved. However it is clear that this loss has meant a loss of

livelihood for many poor people, and that the loss of bushmeat has been associated with a loss in access to forest resources more broadly.

Thus my approach to tackling the bushmeat trade is to agree that pressure on endangered species is serious and to recognize the growing concern within the UK and elsewhere about the impact of the bushmeat trade on endangered species, particularly the great apes. My perspective is that this has complex causes including habitat loss and hunting for both commercial and personal use. And that loss of habitat is often the result of extensive poverty, corruption, poor law enforcement and weak governance. I believe that tackling these underlying causes is key to both poverty reduction and creating the conditions and incentives for sustainable natural resource management and that this perspective brings together those who are concerned for poor people and those who worry about endangered species behind shared remedies.

The UK Government, as a whole, is of course committed to helping to conserve endangered species. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) leads on conservation issues and manages the Darwin Initiative which has funded bushmeat research in Cameroon, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. The UK has endorsed the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Great Ape Survival Project and has provided funding of £175,000 which is over 10% of the initial sum sought by UNEP. DEFRA and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), who provided the funding, hope it this will encourage other countries to contribute. In addition DFID funds the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which helps developing country governments to fund globally important environmental work including conservation. To date DFID has channeled £215 million to GEF and replenishment is currently being negotiated.

But to return to the links between the bushmeat trade and poverty, we must ask whether we should invest more in tackling the bushmeat trade in order to reduce poverty. Let us examine who would benefit. Of the 1.2 billion

people living on less than one dollar a day, an estimated 70%, or 840 million, live in rural areas. For the majority of these people, agriculture and other natural resource-based activities form the basis for improving livelihoods and generating rural economic growth. Of the 840 million rural poor, an estimated 240 million live in arid and semi-arid areas, where livestock rearing rather than crop production is a primary livelihood strategy. Bushmeat is the main livelihood asset for only a small fraction of these people, but it does appear to play a minor role in the strategies of many, for example in the lives of many of the 155 million people living on less than one dollar day in west and central Africa. Therefore we can conclude that better management of bushmeat is important to many poor people.

However, our experience is that in many cases there is limited scope for cost-effective intervention. Increasing regulation and enforcement just pushes the trade underground. The exception to this is where the conditions for sustainable management by poor people are in place or can be put in place.

Where poor people are dependent on bushmeat, our response is not to stop them harvesting or consuming it – that would be wrong and, our experience suggests, very difficult. But where communities have the right to manage their own forest and wildlife resources, within a context that encourages and enables them towards sustainable utilization, experience suggests there is a win-win solution for wildlife and poverty reduction. However, where there is growing poverty, conflict, high mobility of human populations, weak tenure and an unstable political environment, the scope for successful intervention is low.

Obviously DFID is not the only actor on the development agenda. What we must do is win the support of developing country governments and development agencies to this approach so that we increasingly see strategies for better management of natural resources included in all poverty

reduction strategies. This is really the challenge facing your campaign, I hope in addition your bushmeat campaign will work to unite campaigns to support the interests of poor people and the endangered species they live amongst.

We believe that WWF UK is one of the most advanced environmental agencies in understanding this inter-linkage and I am pleased that DFID has put in place a new Programme Partnership Agreement with WWF UK to support their goal of building a stronger livelihoods based approach in their conservation work and that of their partners. I hope this approach will grow and spread.

And in conclusion I hope the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in September will provide a forum for reconsidering the relationship between environment and development in the light of 10 years experience since Rio. I really hope that this Summit will move the environment and development movements closer together. Environment is one pillar of sustainable development – the others are social and economic development and consideration of environmental issues in this context is essential, both to ensure that efforts aiming to eradicate poverty are enduring and that to do this we must be clear that the planet which we all share remains sustainable. I hope that WSSD will mark a new partnership between development and conservation so that animals and other natural resources are managed and used sustainably so that the poor of the world have a better life on a sustainable planet.

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the UK government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty. The government first elected in 1997 has increased its commitment to development by strengthening the department and increasing its budget.

The central focus of the Government's policy, set out in the 1997 White Paper on International Development, is a commitment to the internationally agreed target to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, together with the associated targets including basic health care provision and universal access to primary education by the same date. The second White Paper on International Development, published in December 2000, reaffirmed this commitment, while focusing specifically on how to manage the process of globalisation to benefit poor people.

DFID seeks to work in partnership with governments which are committed to the international targets, and seeks to work with business, civil society and the research community to this end. We also work with multilateral institutions including the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Community.

The bulk of our assistance is concentrated on the poorest countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. We are also contributing to poverty elimination and sustainable development in middle income countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and elsewhere. DFID is also helping the transition countries in central and eastern Europe to try to ensure that the process of change brings benefits to all people and particularly to the poorest.

As well as its headquarters in London and East Kilbride, DFID has offices in many developing countries. In others, DFID works through staff based in British embassies and high commissions.

DFID's headquarters are located at:

DFID
1 Palace Street
London
SW1E 5HE
UK

and at:

DFID
Abercrombie House
Eaglesham Road
East Kilbride
Glasgow G75 8EA
UK

Switchboard: 020 7023 0000 Fax: 020 7023 0016

Website: www.dfid.gov.uk

email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk

Public enquiry point: 0845 3004100

From overseas: +44 1355 84 3132

©Crown Copyright 2001. Brief extracts from this publication may be reproduced provided the source is fully acknowledged.