



## **Environment: journeys through a changing world.**

*Conservation for Whom?*

### **Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, CEO Conservation Through Public Health**

The gorillas are very important and mountain gorillas one of our closest living relatives, we share 98.4% genetic material. When you go out to see them, it's very therapeutic, they look into your eyes and you feel like you're connecting with a close relative. There's only over 700 gorillas left in the world.

#### **Voice over**

Mountain gorillas are one of the world's most endangered species, teetering on the edge of extinction for decades. Today they survive only in the forests of Central Africa, where they have endured years of civil war, habitat loss and poaching for bushmeat.

### **Tugumisirize Yese, Local Entrepreneur**

We used to see the gorillas. There were very few but those few people never feared killing them. They were vermin like other vermin, they were killed, they were poached, and there was no problem.

#### **Voice over**

Half of the world's remaining population of mountain gorillas is found here in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. But as the park lies in the heart of one of the most densely populated parts of Africa, it's continually under threat from people, eager to use the forest's rich resources.

### **Charity Bwiza, Programme Manager, The Bwindi Trust**

The population pressure is increasing and the population in south-western Uganda is the highest in Uganda. And it is also said that it's the highest in Africa. But the land is not increasing

#### **Voice over**

To deal with this threat the Fortress Conservation approach was adopted in Bwindi. This aimed for the total exclusion of people and their activities from the forest enforced by armed rangers.

### **James Byamukama, International Gorilla Conservation Programme**

Originally the communities were allowed to access a number of resources. They would access firewood; they would get mushrooms, wild meat, bamboo shoots and many handicraft products. And when it was made a National Park, then these rights were removed. The removal of any of these forest products was stopped and this implied that the communities lost all what they would get as contributions to their livelihoods. Therefore the communities came out in rage.

### **Charity Bwiza, Programme Manager, The Bwindi Trust**

Communities used to set fire intentionally to the protected area and then fight with the law enforcement so the communities were really, really very hostile

#### **Voice over**

As conservation by force wasn't working a new approach was needed. This conflict had to be resolved. For gorillas to have a sustainable future local people needed to be involved in their conservation rather than excluded from the forest.

**James Byamukama, International Gorilla Conservation Programme**

A question had come: Conserving for who?

Therefore we had to make a shift from that Fortress approach to an Integrated Conservation and Development approach and put the people into conservation.

**Voice over**

The Integrated Conservation and Development approach works by linking wildlife conservation with the welfare of the people around the park.

**Moses Mapesa, Exec. Dir. Uganda Wildlife Authority**

We had to review and rethink the strategy to look into how to make these conservation areas more relevant to the people who live close to them or have ancestral claims to the land. And that is how the whole notion of Integrated Conservation Development programmes started.

**Alastair McNeilage, Wildlife Conservation Society**

One initiative designed to reduce the conflict was also what we call the multiple use programme. The idea was to take account of the fact that some of the things that people want from the forest, small amounts of medicinal plants, weaving materials, could actually be harvested without having a major impact on the forest itself. The quantities they need may be quite small; the resources may be plants that grow quite quickly and are easily renewed and allowing the communities to access those resources could be used as a strategy to give them something back.

**Man 1**

Wild yams help us live longer and remain resistant to diseases. That's the main reason we like them.

**Woman**

I gather enough material to weave three baskets and I keep one to use in the home and sell two.

**Man 2**

When the forest was closed there were problems but since we've been able to access things we need, we've collaborated with the park officials and there have been no problems.

**Tugumisirize Yese, Local Entrepreneur**

Some non-government organisations, even the government have tried to improve the nature of the people neighbouring that gorilla so that they shouldn't at any time point a finger at the gorilla.

**Voice over**

Communities were helped to develop new livelihood activities to replace those lost from their restricted access to the Park.

**Charity Bwiza, Programme Manager, The Bwindi Trust**

We are funding different varieties of community projects like beekeeping and mushroom growing. People used to go into the Park to harvest wild mushrooms, so we started funding individuals and groups to grow mushrooms.

**Tugumisirize Yese, Local Entrepreneur**

They gave me the materials, the sterilising drums, the drier. After helping me with those things, then they gave me knowledge, enough knowledge to grow mushrooms.

**Voice over**

Now conservation was actually benefiting the local communities and their view of gorillas and the forest began to change.

**Tugumisirize Yese, Local Entrepreneur**

Do I need to go into the Park to look for mushrooms to supply the hotels? The mushrooms are here.