

Using Private Sector Alliances to Address Drivers of the Bushmeat Trade: Experience from AWF

Daudi Sumba
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Summary

In this paper we present the AWF conservation enterprise strategy that AWF is implementing across Africa in partnership with communities and the private sector to mitigate direct threats to wildlife conservation such as that from unsustainable use. This strategy gives wildlife economic value through building wide range of successful enterprises, usually involving private sector alliances, which then contribute directly to local livelihoods goals and create incentives for conservation.

The growing bushmeat trade is known to be a critical threat to effective wildlife conservation in western and central Africa, with more limited data available to suggest the same is true in east Africa. Where the trade involves endangered species or hunting in protected areas it is illegal, and in Kenya, for example, all consumptive use of wildlife is illegal. This element of illegality makes the extent and impact of the bushmeat trade very difficult to measure. Conservationists have implemented a wide range of strategies to deal with illegal wildlife consumption with different levels of success. These strategies range from law enforcement to supporting the development of economic alternatives.

This paper defines the AWF approach to conservation enterprise and provides examples of how these can be used to address drivers of the bushmeat trade. We conclude that conservation enterprise is a valuable economic strategy that can be used together with other strategies in a multidisciplinary approach to mitigate the drivers of the bushmeat trade.

1. Introduction

Illegal bushmeat trade has been identified as one of the critical threats to wildlife across Africa (Nasi et al, 2008). In Central and Western Africa, bushmeat is widely consumed and traded informally in rural and urban markets and therefore it has been possible to widely study and estimate the scale of the trade. In these regions, bushmeat trade is a major economic activity worth millions of dollars though is not adequately reflected in national accounts (e.g. Wilkie and Carpenter, 1999; Davies, 2002; Hoyt, 2004). The trade appears to be a crucial livelihood strategy in many areas, providing protein and incomes for the rural poor. Though the trade is complex with many actors and interests, the key drivers of bushmeat trade have also been identified and understood and these include economic ones (demand and prices), and cultural preferences (Cowlshaw et. al, 2004; Wilkie et al, 2005). In contrast, in eastern Africa, wildlife consumption remains poorly researched, with little aggregate understanding of its magnitude or the complexities of the key drivers. Few studies have been conducted to assess the dimensions of bushmeat trade, with the IUCN Traffic study in 2000 (Barnett 2000) the most recent substantial work. AWF hopes that the Mweka Bushmeat Mentor fellows program which has been created to generate information to fill this knowledge gap will generate information across a larger scale that can better inform conservation strategies in future.

Generally, it is believed that bushmeat hunting and trade is continuing to grow in eastern Africa with devastating consequences on species populations. What is driving the trade here is not well understood, but is believed to include both rural poverty as well as commercial opportunism, but to largely exclude cultural preference, so suggesting differing patterns of drivers to those in west and central Africa (Asibey and Child 1991). The bushmeat trade in the region is mostly illegal and is traded clandestinely except in few up-market restaurants where it is licensed. It is very difficult to determine whether the meat on sale in most markets where east Africans gather to enjoy *nyama choma* (roasted meat) is bushmeat or not. Traditionally most of the communities where large concentrations of wildlife are found are believed to have strong cultural practices that forbid bushmeat consumption and trade e.g. the pastoralists such as the Maasai. On face value, this appears to confirm that cultural preference is not a major driver of bushmeat trade in east Africa. Indeed Loibooki et al, (2002) confirmed that most illegal hunting in Tanzania is for cash income (economically driven) and not for cultural reasons. However pastoral communities have been experiencing socio-cultural and economic changes in lifestyles driven by education, pervasive markets and government development initiatives. Indeed Barnett (2000) found that there had occurred changes among the Samburu pastoralists to the extent that bushmeat consumption was now prevalent in households. The illegality and clandestine nature with which bushmeat markets operate has made it difficult to determine the influence of economics (demand and prices) on bushmeat trade. With the current knowledge gaps, it is difficult to determine whether bushmeat trade is contributing to the decline

in wildlife populations being observed across the region or whether the scale of the trade is growing. Conservation strategies are therefore focused on critical threats to wildlife such as habitat loss and defragmentation whose severity and extent is well understood.

In the absence of clear knowledge about the bushmeat trade, its volume, characteristics, and role in the local economies in east Africa, conservationists are innovatively piloting various strategies and adaptively managing their implementation in trying to address this threat. However the measurement of their efficacy remains difficult in the absence of key information on the bushmeat trade. One of the strategies currently employed is targeting the economic drivers of bushmeat trade by providing alternative conservation-linked sources of incomes to community. The rationale here is that if communities that are depleting wildlife resources are given economic alternatives that provide incomes to meet their livelihoods, they will change their attitudes and practices towards conservation and thereafter place higher value on wildlife reducing the threats to wildlife including bushmeat trade. This paper summarises some recent AWF experience in developing private sector alliances for conservation enterprise in order to improve income-based incentives for conservation and build community interests in preventive illegal wildlife harvesting, particularly in eastern Africa where the trade appears to be almost wholly driven by economic factors. .

2. AWF and Private Sector Alliances

2.1 Introduction

AWF is an international organization focused solely on Africa with a mission to work together with the people of Africa to ensure that the wildlife and wild lands of Africa endure forever. AWF implements its work through the African Heartlands Program (AHP), a large landscape level conservation program that seeks to conserve large ecological and economic landscapes with related ecological processes for conservation of wildlife. AWF works in 9 sites called 'Heartlands' in 14 countries of eastern, western, southern and central Africa. In eastern Africa, these include the Kilimanjaro, Samburu, Maasai Steppe and Virunga Heartlands. In these Heartlands, AWF addresses conservation threats through five strategic interventions covering land and habitat conservation; species conservation and applied research; conservation enterprise; capacity building and leadership development; and policy. AWF uses a multi-disciplinary approach to address these threats and therefore integrates strategies from across the five strategy areas. The critical threats in each site are identified and strategies developed together with stakeholders during participatory scoping and planning meetings in each Heartland. During these planning meetings, poaching and illegal wildlife trade has been consistently identified by stakeholders as a critical threat to conservation of species. Stakeholders also suggested that provision of alternatives and incentives as the best strategies for addressing these threats. Within the AWF program, conservation enterprise is proving to be an effective strategy for providing these alternatives and incentives for addressing the bushmeat trade.

2.2 AWF's Conservation Enterprise Program

AWF defines conservation enterprise as a commercial activity designed to create benefit flows that support conservation and livelihood objectives. It is an economic strategy that seeks to give wildlife value by integrating conservation and development goals. The objectives of conservation enterprises are: to achieve commercial success (profitability), reduce threats to wildlife and improve livelihoods for communities and landowners. The AWF rationale for using conservation enterprise is as follows: conservation enterprises provide incentives and alternatives to communities through direct and indirect benefits, which if significant and well managed, improve incomes and livelihoods of the people. As a result, the communities place higher value on wildlife and its conservation which leads to changes in attitudes and practices that reduce threats to wildlife such as bushmeat trade and results in improved wildlife conservation. Admittedly, this is an indirect way of addressing illegal trade but one that has potential if the enterprises are sustainable and generate significant long term benefits that positively impact the communities that trade in bushmeat. Since bushmeat trade is a complex problem with diverse actors and interests, conservation enterprise must be seen as one among many strategies that should be used in a multidisciplinary approach to address the threat.

Since the late 1990s, AWF has been working closely with communities and private sector partners in implementation its conservation enterprise strategy. The AWF approach is to broker as an honest broker and facilitator of partnerships for conservation enterprise between communities that own land and wildlife rights, and private sector operators who have comparative advantage in managing tourism and other conservation enterprise ventures¹. The concept rests firmly on the principle that enterprises must be commercially successful in order to provide significant returns from wildlife that can provide incentives for the communities. AWF has in-house enterprise development staff that have developed tools and processes that they use to provide support services to community and private sector partners to develop conservation enterprises. These services include legal and contractual services; business planning; destination level tourism planning; product design, institutional development and capacity building; other facilitation support such as community mobilization, infrastructure development; and financing which has mostly composed of grants that strengthen community equity in partnerships beyond the resources they bring e.g. land and wildlife. In the recent past, AWF has started to explore other financing mechanisms such as debt financing and venture capital funds for enterprise development.

Various private sector alliances have been developed and supported successfully in AWF. The value these partnerships deliver is driven by the resource potential of the community area, the capacity of community institutions, security, the prevailing policy environment, economies of scale availed by tourism circuits and infrastructure among others. Using the Roe et al typology (Roe et al, 2001), the major types of partnerships that AWF has brokered between communities and private sector operators include:

- i. **Joint ventures** where communities provide land and other resources while the private sector provides the capital investments to develop the enterprise. Thereafter the private sector provides benefits from use of the land through land rent payments, bed-night levies, employment. In this model, the enterprise is normally owned by the communities but managed by the private sector partner on a management agreement for an agreed number of years. Most of the tourism enterprises in AWF follow this model and include the Koiya Starbeds Lodge in Kenya (see Sumba et. al, 2007); Sanctuary at Ol Lentile among others.
- ii. **Tripartite ventures** also called community-public-private sector partnerships are typically formed when a government agency such as a protected area provides use rights to a community which forms the basis for a partnership between that community and the private sector. An example is Nkuringo lodge where the partnership is based on gorilla viewing permits that the Uganda Wildlife Authority has allocated to the community.
- iii. **Concessions and leasing of resource use rights** is where a private sector partner leases the rights to use certain resources owned by a community and provides benefits such as lease fees, employment etc. This is typical used in the wildlife hunting industry.
- iv. **Developing and marketing products** is where the private sector partners with a community group and works with them to develop and market products from resources that exists within their areas. In most areas, communities have abundant resources but they lack the expertise to turn them into products or the ability to successfully market local products. This partnership is typically used for cultural products as well as non-timber forest products.
- v. **Developing community enterprises** is where a private sector partners with a community to assist them to develop their own enterprise that they manage. Most often this enterprise is developed as a spin-off enterprise of a larger private sector enterprise to which it provides complementary products. Examples include local cultural villages that provide entertainment for tourists from large hotels. They also include other smaller enterprises that take advantage of the supply value chain to provide products to lodges e.g. local vegetables, poultry products etc.

These partnerships are normally formalised through signing of contracts or agreements stipulating terms, conditions and responsibilities for each partner. How each type of partnership is used depends on the

¹ The main types of enterprises that AWF supports include high end tourism lodges; cultural villages; harvesting and processing of non-timber forest products such as honey, gum resins; scientific research tourism; agricultural intensification; improved livestock husbandry; and integrated livestock wildlife ranching. Currently the program is heavily focused on tourism with over 65% of the enterprises based on conservation tourism and the rest on bio-enterprises and agriculture.

context, the key drivers to be addressed and the goals to be achieved. Generally the first three types of partnership defined above tend to generate higher returns to communities and are therefore most likely to work in providing effective incentives and alternatives to illegal trade.

3. AWF Case Studies: Private Sector Alliances Addressing Conservation Incentives

Conservation enterprises are an economic strategy for addressing threats to conservation, such as those underlying illegal bushmeat trade, through provision of incentives and alternative livelihoods. They are used together with other strategies such as law enforcement, streamlining quotas for sustainable hunting, increased protection, provision of alternative protein, community education so that they can address the interests of diverse actors such as hunters, traders and consumers in rural and urban areas (Bowen-Jones, 2003). In the AWF program, the following examples illustrate how we have used private sector alliances to change incentives.

3.1 Revitalizing Agricultural Production and Marketing in Congo Heartland, Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Congo Heartland in DRC lies between the Lopori and Maringa rivers. It is covered by dense tropical forests of the Congo Basin forest and is home to some of the most unique and endangered species including the bonobo (*pan paniscus*). Over the years, the forests and its biodiversity has been threatened by logging for timber and bushmeat hunting and trade. When civil war that broke out in the area in 1993, this exacerbated the threats. The front line for the war was in this area and therefore people abandoned their farms and fled into the forests for safety. Commerce along the river ceased as soldier and militia used the river to access the battle front. Starved of food and livelihoods, they resorted to bushmeat hunting and trade for survival. In this area, bushmeat hunting, trade and consumption is driven by cultural preferences and economic factors. It is very common to see bushmeat being sold in local markets within the Heartland.

When the war ended and AWF started to work in the area in 2004 with support from the USAID-CARPE program. One of the major urgent concerns was how to address the bushmeat trade that had decimated wildlife populations in the area. A socioeconomic baseline survey conducted in the area confirmed that there was extensive bushmeat hunting and trade. The surveys also identified revitalization of agriculture as a potential strategy for addressing bushmeat trade. Communities indicated that if market access was restored for agricultural produce, they were willing to restart agriculture to provide alternative livelihoods and reduce pressure on the forest and wildlife, and helped AWF design an Agricultural Production and Marketing enterprise. AWF entered into partnership with a commercial boat operator from Kinshasa who agreed to reactivate commercial transport along the Congo and Lomako rivers to these remote villages. The boat reactivated commerce on the river by bringing manufactured goods from Kinshasa and buying agricultural produce from farmers for sale downstream. One of the key conditions for the partnership was that no forest products and bushmeat would be allowed on the boats, as there were fears that reopening river transport would increase bushmeat hunting and trade. Under AWF supervision, the boat brought 180 traders with 134 tonnes of manufactured goods to the area which they sold and bought 534 tonnes of agricultural produce composed mainly of maize, coffee, cocoa and palm oil for sale downstream. It made a round trip of 3,200 kilometres in two months and earned US\$45,000, far in excess of producer expectations.

AWF learned important lessons from this enterprise that have been used to improve river trading operations and better address bushmeat hunting and trade. We conclude that by directly improving market access for small scale producers, bushmeat trade can be better controlled and even curtailed. We learned that reviving agriculture offered a direct alternative to bushmeat trade but that this must be complemented by other strategies such as improving agricultural extension, encouraging farmers to grow high value cash crops and organizing them into associations which can supply higher volumes of produce to markets, in order to realize significantly higher incomes and reduce dependence on bushmeat.

3.2 Koiya Starbeds Ecolodge, Samburu Heartland, Kenya

The Koiya Starbeds ecolodge is located along the Ewaso Nyiro River in Laikipia District of northern Kenya. The lodge was created by a partnership between a private sector partner – Oryx Limited – and the

Koiya Maasai community. In this area, pastoralism and bee keeping are the main livelihood activities. Traditionally, bushmeat hunting and trade is prohibited by a set of cultural taboos and practices. However the Maasai are currently experiencing rapid transformation caused by education and exposure to market economics which have tremendously weakened their cultural values. The danger that bushmeat hunting and consumption by locals and outsiders could grow to critical levels is real and recognised, especially given that wildlife is an open access state-owned resource in Kenya. To improve conservation incentives, AWF supported the community in the year 2000 to develop the Starbeds facility in partnership with the private sector investor to provide for livelihoods, increase the value of wildlife among the community and strengthen conservation practice in the area. The lodge opened in 2001 and has to date earned the 1200 member community over US\$140,000 in direct cash benefits from wildlife tourism. The lodge also employs six community members. Income from the lodge is used to support education of community members, to provide social services like health care and to hire community scouts that protect the wildlife, the conservation area in order to secure wildlife for tourism. We conclude that the lodge has been successful in increasing the value of wildlife to the community as a source of alternative livelihoods from tourism, and that this has increased community investment in wildlife conservation and forestalled any bushmeat hunting and trade. Similar results have also been achieved with other lodges that AWF has supported in Kijabe community in Samburu (Sanctuary at Ol Lentile); Elerai community in Kilimanjaro (Satao Elerai Lodge); Santawani Lodge in Botswana; Nkuringo Lodge in Uganda and Sabinyo Silverback lodge in Rwanda.

3.3 Linking Livestock Markets Conservation Program, Samburu Heartland, Kenya

This enterprise initiative links pastoralists in northern Kenya to high value beef markets which have so far been inaccessible and inequitable, in order to improve economic returns to communities from mixed land use that accommodates both wildlife conservation and improved livestock husbandry. This program is facilitated by AWF in partnership with a private sector company Ol Pejeta Conservancy (OPC) and pastoral communities in Samburu Heartland. Before communities can enlist in the program, they sign up to a conservation code of practice that obliges them to observe certain conservation practices including branding of cattle, destocking, rangeland management and wildlife management and monitoring. After communities satisfy the requirements, they are able to sell their cattle to OPC at a price that is 30% above the normal market price. The enterprise will purchase 20,000 cattle from communities and generate US\$8 million in benefits to the communities over the next 10 years. This should generate significant benefits that will potentially transform livelihoods in the heartland, encourage pastoralists to keep smaller and better quality herds, reduce pressure on rangelands and improve habitat quality for wildlife conservation. This enterprise can therefore address bushmeat hunting and trade through its code of conservation practices. Communities that engage in bushmeat hunting and trade cannot participate in the program and the program is expected to have a hugely beneficial impact on conservation incentives.

4. *Conclusions and Lessons Learned*

For conservation enterprise to be effective in address the drivers of illegal or unsustainable wildlife use, certain critical factors for success must exist. The enterprise must have a champion who demonstrates strong leadership and continually links the enterprise to the mitigation of the bushmeat threat. There must be strong local institutions to support the enterprise and implement complementary strategies that when taken together mitigate the threat of bushmeat trade. There must also be strong non-governmental organizations that provide support services to ensure that strong enterprises result that will provide sufficient incentives to address the threat of bushmeat trade. The enterprise should also have comparative advantage required to deliver high value benefits and incentives that are critical for mitigating the threat of bushmeat trade.

Conservation enterprises will be most effective in addressing the bushmeat trade if they embed complementary strategies for dealing with the threat and reinforcing intended changes in incentives and behaviours within the operations of the enterprise. For example, in the Congo case, as part of the agreement, AWF was able to control bushmeat movement and curtail possible increased opportunities for bushmeat trade. Lack of supportive policy and legal framework may present a challenge for conservation enterprises and their effectiveness in providing pro-conservation incentives. This can be overcome through conservation codes of practices or agreements with beneficiary communities.

There are many risks inherent in the use of conservation enterprise as an intervention strategy. Benefits must be sufficient to make over-harvesting unattractive. Benefit sharing mechanisms must distribute the benefits appropriately within the community. Agreements must be fair and properly structured to avoid future conflicts that could derail a successful enterprise and reduce its ability to address the threat of bushmeat trade.

Above all, if the enterprise is to continue to mitigate the threat well into the future, it must be commercially successful and not depend on external support organizations for its financial or operational sustainability. Each support organization must plan its exit strategy in a manner that enhances sustainability of the enterprise.

In this paper, we have discussed the experience of AWF in using conservation enterprise as an economic strategy for mitigating the drivers of unsustainable and/or illegal wildlife use. Conservation enterprise, when well implemented, can provide the incentives necessary for communities to adopt practices that reduce threats. Conservation enterprise within AWF is generally structured around private sector alliances to ensure commercial success. Although conservation enterprise can be a useful strategy for mitigating the threats posed by bushmeat trade, it cannot do so alone because the bushmeat trade is complex with many actors and many interests. However, enterprise has proved to be effective where well targeted, implemented and monitored.

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