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## Primates Research Project: The Bushmeat Crisis

The bushmeat crisis remains to be one of the most major contributors to the endangerment of primates till this day. Although the bushmeat crisis alludes to the rapid depletion of wildlife around the entire world, the continents of Africa and Asia are the most heavily affected. As a matter of fact, this dire scenario is responsible for posing a greater threat to wildlife as compared with more widely discussed issues such as deforestation and rapid human population expansion like never before. The reason as to why it is becoming a never-ending issue is due to the severe poverty in these nations. Therefore, these animals aren't only poached for financial income but also for a basic yet cheap means of protein-rich food for impoverished people. Although the following word, "bushmeat" merely stands for any wild animal killed for the purpose of eating its meat, in this case, I will discuss the illegal hunting of chimpanzees and apes in Congo.

Firstly, this problem strictly resides with the emergence of human population expansion within Congo (i.e., a 3.3% annual growth rate). Thus, resulting in a significant demand for food. Furthermore, if one were to take poverty into account, it is quite evident that attaining "bushmeat" will forever be practiced on massive scale until it is truly dealt with. After all, Congo's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita is solely comprised of only \$444.51 (INF). It is also important to note that the consumption of ape and chimpanzee meat is believed to hold medicinal value equivalent to that of high status or affluence. For an example, in Africa, high-class individuals such as a multitude of government officials, tourists, and foreigners tend to look upon this meat as a popular delicacy. Additionally, the largest demand of "bushmeat" is primarily derived from commercial hunters who typically have industrial professions and hunt whatever animals they stumble upon. Finally, the meat is then dried and distributed around the entire world. In particular, the Congo Basin is one of the major regions where "bushmeat" is typically gathered. As a matter of fact, it's the world's second largest tropical rainforest with 6 million tons of "bushmeat" gathered here on a yearly basis (Tworoski). Besides the threat of extinction looking over African wildlife due to the "bushmeat" crisis, there is also the risk of disease transmission. For example, great apes are as adversely affected by the Ebola virus as humans. Ebola can be transmitted to humans from contact with contaminated meat and eating bushmeat is believed to be a cause of Ebola outbreaks in humans. With 180,000 pounds of bushmeat being smuggled into the United States annually, this problem could quickly affect any of us (Stanford).

Another reason as to why the "bushmeat" trade is still alive today is due to the current state of the logging industry. This is due to the companies moving into the region of Congo to build roadways with the intent of offering an easy means of transport between two previously

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inaccessible regions full of wildlife and urban markets. Additionally, the logging industry tends to pay their workers several minimal wages to encourage them to hunt not only for financial gains, but for survival purposes as well. Finally, resulting in a larger catch per the worker while on the job. Besides the logging industry, the oil industry plays a massive role in worsening the “bushmeat” crisis dramatically as well. According to a recent oil exploration conducted within Congo, over a time period of 2 months, 350 animals were killed off at a single checkpoint. Among the 350 animals were 54 protected species (i.e., gorillas, chimpanzees, apes, etc.) (Tworoski).

With all this being said, the developed world is equally responsible in bearing a huge amount of responsibility for the increase of “bushmeat” hunting not only in Congo, but within the whole world as a whole. This selfish demand for attaining resources as a means of producing wealth has been responsible for greatly influencing both the supply and demand of “bushmeat” throughout Africa and beyond. As one can clearly tell, the “bushmeat” crisis may be too difficult to solve, but it still can be fixed by several means. For an example, one could launch a campaign influencing the general public about the harsh reality of “bushmeat” trading and poaching. Alyssa Menz, a renowned anthropologist from Columbia University, addresses a variety of ideas to stop this issue in “A Means to Alleviate the Bushmeat Crisis?” as follows: “Beyond ... this study, educational programs are necessary to address issues in all areas of the spectrum ... Instituting educational programs would raise the awareness of the general public about the ... bushmeat crisis and its adverse effects on the environment, economic security, and health” (Menz). Besides keeping society educated and spreading general awareness of this topic, strict laws and regulations should be enforced and obeyed. Additionally, one could also establish a means to seek alternative protein sources and livelihoods that steer clear from anything “bushmeat” related.

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