

Exploring the Connection between Poultry Production and Reduced Wild Meat Consumption

USAID CONSERVING THE BIODIVERSITY OF NORTHERN CONGO BY DIVERSIFYING THE LIVELIHOODS OF BUSHMEAT VALUE CHAIN AGENTS AND INCREASING POULTRY PRODUCTION

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Activity Summary

Communities around Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the north of the Republic of the Congo (RoC) rely heavily on wild meat for animal protein. The majority of communities' protein intake comes from wild meat hunting (3,000 tons/year), followed by imported poultry (600 tons/year), and backyard chicken raising (400 tons/year). The current domestic supply of meat sources is failing to meet the high demand, opening up a "protein gap," particularly in urban areas. Local consumers fill this gap with imported chicken and wild meat. Hunting for wild meat is threatening the survival of vulnerable wildlife in RoC's forests—including at the edge of national parks—as well as food security and rural livelihoods. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Conserving the Biodiversity of Northern Congo by Diversifying the Livelihoods of Bushmeat Value Chain Agents and Increasing Poultry Production activity in September 2020. Called "Soso Pona Moto Nyonso" in Lingala, or Chicken for Everyone, the activity addresses unsustainable levels of wild meat consumption in RoC by combining livelihood and biodiversity-focused interventions. This case study addresses the activity's approach and early results, including successes and barriers to protecting wildlife by increasing alternative protein sources and developing a more diverse economy.

Approach & Implementation

To implement sustainable and alternative meat options in RoC, USAID led a collaborative initiative with five implementing partners: Wildlife Conservation Society, World Poultry Foundation, Village Enterprise, and RoC's Ministry of Forest Economy and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries. These partners are the most active entities in the country on issues related to wild meat consumption. For example, the Wildlife Conservation Society has been active in RoC for 30 years

Activity Highlights



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Wildlife Conservation Society, World Poultry Foundation, Village Enterprise, Ministry of Forest Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries.



LOCATION

Northern Republic of the Congo (RoC)



FUNDING AMOUNT

\$3 million



PERFORMANCE PERIOD

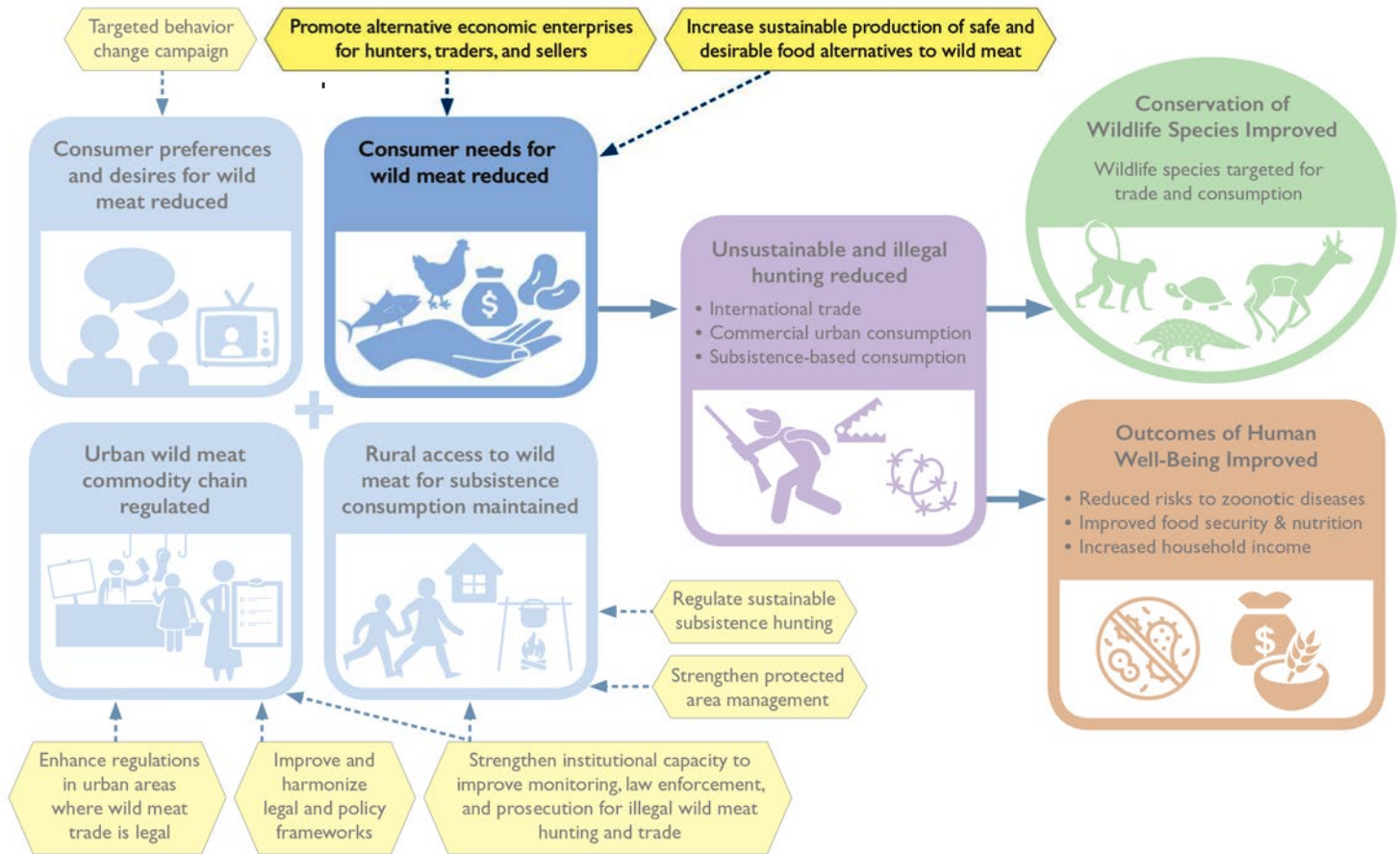
September 2020–
September 2024



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Alternative Economic Enterprises. Sustainable Food Alternatives. Communications, Demand Reduction

Figure 1: Chicken for Everyone approaches highlighted on the Theory of Change



and helped establish Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in 1993. During their long-term involvement, they learned that law enforcement alone was insufficient to stop the unsustainable demand for wild meat.

By increasing the availability of locally raised poultry, Chicken for Everyone aims to diminish the demand for wild meat, protecting endangered species and pristine national parks. Further, it aims to increase household revenues for local chicken producers and improve local communities' quality of life. The activity applies an approach that the [African Poultry Multiplication Initiative](#) developed in 2016 to overcome issues such as a lack of veterinary services, low egg production of local chicken breeds, high feed costs, and unmet feed demand. Further, it provides loans for production inputs (chicken, feed, and veterinary services) and financial literacy training programs to increase community members' entrepreneurial and management capacity.

USAID, in collaboration with its partners, co-designed a three-phase activity. From September 2020 to September 2021, Phase 1 assessed potential protein substitutions, knowledge gaps, and sustainable methods to reduce wild meat consumption. This phase identified chickens as a culturally acceptable substitute for wild meat in the target area, both for consumption and as a revenue source for community members in the wild meat value chain. The activity's current phase, Phase 2, taking place from September 2021 to September 2023, implements the identified solutions to reduce wild meat consumption. Programming includes increasing poultry production by introducing brooding units of a new chicken breed (Sasso) and diversifying the incomes of bushmeat value chain actors by creating and operationalizing community household micro-enterprises. From September 2023 to September 2024, Phase 3 will scale up the activity over the next 12 months with support from private sector investors. To promote the adoption of these solutions, the activity engages local communities, including men, women, and Indigenous Peoples living in the settlements around the *Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park*.

Indicators and Anticipated Results

Chicken for Everyone aims to reduce threats to biodiversity in RoC's northern forests by increasing poultry production as an alternative source of animal protein and diversifying the livelihoods of wild meat value chain actors.

Table I: Chicken for Everyone Goals, Objectives, and Indicators

Goals and Objectives	Indicators
Goal: To develop a robust, well-researched, and implementable plan to increase poultry production in RoC and diversify the livelihoods of wild meat value chain agents.	Implement a plan to increase poultry production and diversify communities' livelihoods as a substitute to wild meat.
Objective 1: Understand the poultry value chain, source of credit, and partnerships in RoC.	Percentage of population in northern RoC who consume poultry.
	Number of micro, small, and medium enterprises, including farmers, receiving agriculture-related credit in this program.
	Number of partners involved.
	Number of credit providers willing to support poultry farmers.
Objective 2: Identify barriers to reducing the cost of poultry feed and the feasibility of producing alternative feed with zero deforestation.	Price per kilogram of chicken feed for supported farmers lower than the baseline by September 2024.
	Number of farmers using mealworm as cost-effective poultry feed in northern RoC.
	Number of hectares of potential savannah habitat suited for agriculture conversion identified.
Objective 3: Access to veterinary services with comprehensive logistics for chicken health.	Number of available and accessible veterinary providers in RoC.
	Number of chicken deaths due to diseases over a growing season (one year).
Objective 4: Identify barriers to reducing the cost of poultry feed and the feasibility of producing alternative feed with zero deforestation.	Percentage of local population that consumes bushmeat and percentage of meals containing bushmeat.
	Number of micro-enterprises and farmers supported in this program.



Lessons Learned

Learning Question: How effective is alternative protein substitution for subsistence-level consumption of wild meat?

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN POULTRY PRODUCTION AND WILD MEAT CONSUMPTION

The communities' willingness to adopt a new chicken breed is an encouraging step toward improving and increasing alternative protein sources in communities. The partnership with World Poultry Foundation gave community members access to Sasso chickens, which are more disease-resistant (not requiring vaccines after purchase), need less feed, produce three times more eggs, and have 40 percent lower production costs than traditional chicken breeds used in the target area. Sasso chickens are also a dual-purpose breed, suitable for both egg and meat production. Despite the success of the Sasso chicken breed, there remains

a need to understand if increasing the availability of poultry can replace wild meat as the dominant protein source in the activity area. Tradition, taste, economy, and leadership pose possible barriers to this change. The activity is triangulating monitoring results from other projects with results from market surveys to determine how changing biodiversity trends affect wild meat consumption, wild meat prices in the market, and wildlife populations. The team has seen increased interest from local communities in alternative livelihoods, with the activity now supporting more than 600 households engaged in more than 200 micro-enterprises. Implementation of Phase 3 should help the activity further its understanding of the effectiveness of alternative protein sources.



Lessons Learned

Learning Question: Where are the synergies between wild meat interventions and those focused on zoonotic disease, food security, and household income in USAID programming? What actions can USAID staff take to support mutually-reinforcing interventions?

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY NUTRITION

By assessing community needs, the activity established a better understanding of how to support sustainable consumption and access to wild meat alternatives to the local communities. Increasing local chicken production enables community members to plan their protein consumption and have more consistent access to a nutritious diet. Community members who rely on wild meat and foraged food suffer from the unpredictability of food supplies. By creating incentives

(e.g., financial independence and community status) and educating community members about the risks of eating wild meat (e.g., zoonotic diseases), the activity reinforced this behavior change. To reduce wild meat demand, the activity offered financial coaching and chicken breeding training to community members and poachers, and also distributed temporary chicken homes. The activity has seen great value in combining livelihood interventions, community nutrition efforts, and biodiversity programming in northern RoC.



Lessons Learned

Learning Question: What combination, if any, of strategic approaches are effective in achieving threat reduction and improving human well-being, and under what conditions?

PROGRAMMING SENSITIVITY TO CULTURES AND GENDER ROLES STRENGTHENS INCLUSIVE LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

USAID recognizes that greater gender equality and women's empowerment strengthens biodiversity and conservation programming. Men and women in RoC's Indigenous communities play different roles in using and managing natural resources. Conservation strategies are more effective when considering different aspirations, experiences, ethnic groups, and opportunities of women and men. As the primary providers of food and care, women are significant contributors to the health and well-being of their households. Therefore, with the support of the activity's local partners, women are encouraged to collaborate and be involved with inclusive female entrepreneurship. This program has led to increased

financial independence through entrepreneurial training for both men and women to promote chicken as an alternative to wild meat.

COMMUNITIES AND INNOVATION

Communities are not always reluctant to innovate, but may need to better understand the recommendations that conservation and development experts and researchers offer. They must also be supported technically and financially in proposed new approaches or strategies. The Chicken for Everyone activity addressed these potential bottlenecks by providing veterinary assistance and financial support to communities, leading to strong local engagement. While some stakeholders had never experienced a poultry activity before, they were fully engaged to learn and practice.



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About this series: In 2022, USAID collected case studies addressing the questions posed in the Wild Meat Learning Agenda. The series looks at USAID-funded activities from around the world. For more information and resources on USAID's Wild Meat Collaborative Learning Group, please visit <https://biodiversitylinks.org/learning-evidence/wild-meat-collaborative-learning-group>. The information provided in the case study series does not necessarily represent the views or positions of USAID or the U.S. government.