



December 2020

Sir,

Thank you for recognising the social, economic, and ecological importance of wildlife conservation in Africa ("Blood Money", 7 December). This issue is hotly contested globally, and particularly so in the UK now as the UK Government considers a ban on hunting imports.

You correctly warn that insidious misinformation can influence vital upcoming policy decisions. In this case, those decisions will have important consequences for the lives of millions of people living in rural African communities currently reeling from severe health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

However, while warning about misinformation you perpetuate falsehoods such as trophy hunting endangering wildlife populations and not creating economic benefits for impoverished rural communities. And by highlighting notorious misinformation campaigns that illegitimately claim to speak for African people, you imply that all African voices on these issues are untrustworthy.

Legitimate representatives of rural African people have much to contribute to these critical debates. So do African NGOs dedicated to identifying culturally appropriate, and socially just ways to conserve African wildlife. We stand ready to participate but we are shut out, as exemplified by your editorial which does not contain a single African perspective.

You have enormous power to influence policy decisions. However, by perpetuating falsehoods you risk endangering the livelihoods of rural African people and the lives of the wildlife we all cherish. And by choosing not to engage with legitimate local leaders you deny them opportunities to contribute to global debates whose outcomes will seriously affect their ability to recover from the economic ravages of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely,

Kudzai Makombe, Resource Africa South Africa
Liz Rihoy, Resource Africa UK