



## **Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka**

### ***Gorillas in her Midst***

In the legacy of the late Dian Fossey, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka has become one of the leading conservationists and scientists working to save the critically endangered mountain gorillas of East Africa.

Under siege by poachers, loss of habitat and warfare, “Dr. Gladys” has discovered another serious threat to these majestic creatures—transmission of human diseases to gorillas called “zoonotic transmission”—afflictions ranging from tuberculosis to scabies. Her mission: to improve African public health to save the gorillas from human-borne illnesses. Gorillas and humans have a 98 percent genetic resemblance, making transmission of diseases between the species highly probable.

As Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH), a grassroots, nonprofit organization based in Uganda with at US Office at Colgate University School of Environmental Studies, Dr. Gladys promotes conservation and public health by improving primary health care to both people and animals in and around protected areas in Africa with a vision to control transmission of disease where people, wildlife and livestock meet.

The 38-year-old doctor, trained at the University of London’s Royal Veterinary College, has won accolades from Africa to the U.S.

The distinguished Whitley Fund for Nature in London chose Dr. Gladys to receive its top award, The Whitley Gold Award for 2009, in a juried competition of worldwide conservationists. The award was presented by HRH The Princess Royal Anne.

In 2008, she was honored with the San Diego Zoo’s “Conservation in Action Award” and was among eight women given an award for outstanding contribution towards tourism development and women empowerment in 2007. She was the recipient of the prestigious Ashoka Fellowship in 2006.

After deciding to be a veterinarian at age 12, Dr. Gladys became a conservationist at 18. Studying for her career, she conducted research on intestinal parasites in wild chimpanzees and parasites and tourist-habituated and non-tourist-habituated mountain gorillas. She found gorillas visited by tourists had a higher parasite rate than those not visited, implying that tourism can have a negative impact on mountain gorillas’ health.

Between 1996 and 2000, she set up the first Veterinary Unit in the Uganda Wildlife Authority, pioneering the first wildlife translocations in her country since the 1970s and developed the first community education campaigns on risks of humans and gorilla disease transmission among others.

An articulate, polished advocate, Dr. Gladys has been featured in documentaries on BBC 1, National Geographic, Animal Planet, MNet and Uganda Television.

Dr. Gladys is a powerful speaker about the interconnectedness of all species and the human links to our most endangered wildlife.

