

## Illegal Wildlife Trade: Half Year Report

(due 31 October)

<b>Project Ref No</b>	IWT013
<b>Project Title</b>	African Wildlife Forensics Network – capacity and coordination for law enforcement
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Angola, Botswana, Congo, Gabon, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network (TRACE), Botswana Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT), Gabon - Agence Nationale des parcs nationaux (ANPN), Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI), Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Jorge Rios, Chief of UNODC Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime
<b>Report date and number (eg HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website</b>	N/A

### 1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Significant progress has been made over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project. Progress is reported below on a regional and national basis.

#### REGIONAL WORKSHOP, BOTSWANA

One regional planning workshop was held from 17-19 May 2016 in Gaborone, Botswana with representatives from 7 project countries. This workshop brought together senior representatives from national agencies as well as key regional experts in the fields of wildlife law enforcement and forensic science, to discuss how wildlife forensic services could be developed on a regional basis.

A series of presentations and discussions throughout the workshop generated a wealth of information relating to wildlife forensic science, regional wildlife law enforcement efforts, national needs and possible models for establishing cross-border forensic services.

Based on the information presented and the expertise within the workshop, participants identified a range of issues that would need to be addressed across areas of Enforcement, Science and Prosecution, to implement a network of wildlife forensic service provision.

On the final day of the workshop, participants focused on identifying solutions to each of the issues identified across the Enforcement, Science and Prosecution categories. Based on these discussions, the project team distilled the next steps required to increase the implementation of wildlife forensic analysis more broadly within Africa. For more information please find full report of the workshop attached.

With regards to the success of the workshop:

- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop increased their knowledge and skills in wildlife forensics.

- 100% of respondents found the information presented to be relevant and useful.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop was well organized.

A full workshop evaluation report is attached to this document.

## **REGIONAL WORKSHOP, NAMIBIA**

A wildlife forensics training session was delivered during a one-week regional workshop on “Combating Wildlife Trafficking for Prosecutors and Judicial Officers” in Windhoek, Namibia from 1-5 August, 2016 organised by UNODC and US Department of Justice. This workshop aimed to train prosecutors and judicial officers from 44 southern African countries on the handling of wildlife related offences. A session on forensics covered all aspects of wildlife forensics from crime scene to courtroom. The session was jointly run by three presenters including the ‘African Wildlife Forensics Network’ project coordinator. During this session, the project coordinator briefed the participants on the project, delivered awareness raising of wildlife forensic science and engaged in a discussion about future options for regional sharing of wildlife forensic services.

During the forensics training session, two prosecutors from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Zambia (DNPW) engaged with the project coordinator, expressing the urgent requirement of forensic evidence for wildlife law enforcement because Zambia has recently revised their national wildlife legislation with stronger penalties for wildlife criminals. Together with a prosecutor from the Malawian Police Service (MPS) they asked for short to medium-term options to gain access to wildlife forensic services in the region and to receive relevant forensic training for investigators and prosecutors.

## **CITES COP17**

The project team attended the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CITES COP17), held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 24 September to 4 October. This provided a valuable opportunity to meet with project partners, the majority of whom were present at the conference. Details are included below under each country heading.

UNODC and TRACE organised a side event in the margins of the CITES COP17 to update the Parties and broader stakeholders on the development of wildlife forensic applications to support trade control, intelligence and enforcement activities relating to CITES. The session covered multiple aspects of wildlife forensic science, from high-level international coordination to laboratory analysis, and from the direct support of prosecutions through to the delivery of regulatory tests. Expert speakers were drawn from throughout the international CITES community, representing a range of taxonomic and enforcement issues, and included a presentation on the capacity building work being undertaken through this project.

Over 100 people attended the side event, including multiple project partners and project country representatives. Feedback received was extremely positive. Funding for the event was provided by USAID-TRAFFIC Wildlife TRAPS programme and the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science

Thanks were expressed to the UK government for funding the important work of the project.

## **ANGOLA**

Angola sent a junior representative from the Ministry of Environment to attend the regional workshop in Botswana. During a discussion with the representative, the project team raised the lack of responsiveness in year one of the project. The representative agreed to assist with information gathering to inform the wildlife forensics assessment. The project team translated the law enforcement and forensic laboratory questionnaires into Portuguese and these were then distributed by the representative. However, five months later, after multiple follow up emails, only two completed questionnaires have been returned. The project team has decided

not to chase Angola any further and as such, an assessment report will not be completed.

## **BOTSWANA**

Project partner, Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) hosted the regional workshop in May and were key to the organisation and execution of an extremely successful event.

The project coordinator has had a series of meetings with the Director of the Botswana Police Forensic Science Services and the key counterparts within DWNP, to outline future training and equipment needs.

Partnership with NFI is strong, with good communication and coordination. NFI will lead a training for lab analysts at the Botswana Police Forensic Science Service (BPS-FSS) from 31 October – 4 November with participation from the project coordinator. This training will also provide an opportunity for the project team to meet with NFI and national counterparts to agree upon next steps for wildlife forensic capacity building in Botswana.

BPS-FSS and DWNP were cautious about offering a regional wildlife forensic service. The project team have reassured them that this was not a plan for the short term, until lab personnel are comfortable with wildlife forensic service provision at a national level.

## **REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

The national wildlife forensics assessment report has been finalized and is currently being translated to French. It will then be shared with national counterparts.

## **GABON**

Following the regional workshop, the project team held an in-depth planning session with representatives of Gabon in Gaborone, Botswana. A plan for forensic capacity building was proposed, integrating both wildlife and human forensic elements, as desired by ANPN. Future steps include:

1. Identify investigative and judicial needs for wildlife forensic evidence, to be delivered as part of the current project.
2. Elephant traceability DNA system to be validated as forensic test, to be delivered as part of the current project.
3. Digital human fingerprint collection system to be evaluated for use at wildlife crime scenes using a hand-held system. Approaching Police to determine interest in collaboration with ANPN.
4. Mobile Phone Forensics capacity to be accessible, to be delivered as part of the current project. Approaching Police to determine interest in collaboration with ANPN.
5. DNA forensics lab to be set up requiring: ANPN to approach Police with aim to set up wildlife forensics lab at police lab building; ABI sequencer to be bought with existing ANPN funds (GEF 6, AFD); Lab equipped and training provided for wildlife and human DNA sequencing analysis for forensics purposes; Wildlife genetics research capacity to be developed at IRET lab – researchers could perform DNA extractions and PCR at IRET, and pay for sequencing services run by forensics lab. (Long term plan)

An in-country visit to deliver points one and two above and to further explore points three to five, had been planned for September 2016, however, due to political unrest in Gabon following the contested presidential election, the project team were advised to delay this visit. It is expected that this visit will be rescheduled before the end of 2016.

The wildlife forensics assessment report for Gabon has not yet been finalized due to multiple

rounds of comments and revisions. This delay is not necessarily negative since it illustrates the engagement of the national partners and their interest in the content of the report.

## **MALAWI**

Wildlife forensic assessment report completed.

Engagement with project partners in Malawi continues to be positive. The project team met with national partners including Director of National Parks at COP17 to discuss satellite lab options. They have identified a possible facility, of which the project coordinator is familiar. The project coordinator discussed the need for an in-country visit before the end of the year since further information is required to evaluate their lab requirements so that the necessary infrastructure can be ordered before the end of the year.

In an effort to coordinate and align capacity building efforts, the project team are partnering with the RSPCA and UK Border Force to deliver capacity building training in the country. In October, UK Border Force will deliver training to border post personnel; the project team have provided advice on content for the forensic component. Plans are underway for the project team to deliver a forensic component of training for prosecutors and judges in Malawi, organised by RSPCA and UK Border Force at the beginning of 2017.

## **NAMIBIA**

The Namibian wildlife forensic assessment report has been completed. It is not as comprehensive as other reports since essentially, Namibia have detailed plans to develop a new national forensic lab by 2019 with capacity to conduct human and wildlife forensic analysis. In terms of resource implications, the national budget is already in place and no additional budget is required.

The project team plan to maintain contact and involvement with the national counterparts and provide required assistance to them as the lab develops.

## **ZAMBIA**

Following completion of the wildlife forensics needs assessment, and the subsequent participation of the Zambian Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) at the AWFN workshop in Gaborone, Botswana, in May 2016, the project team were invited to Zambia to discuss the development of national wildlife forensic capacity in more detail. The aim of the visit was to evaluate the proposed system for performing wildlife DNA forensic analysis for species identification and to advise on how the AWFN project could support planned implementation.

The series of meetings were held including almost all of the relevant stakeholders for the development and application of wildlife DNA forensic services within Zambia. A proposed operational pathway was agreed upon, which requires close cooperation between the DNPW and the national vet lab (CVRI) situated in the Ministries of Tourism & Arts and Fisheries and Livestock, respectively.

The proposed operational pathway is described as follows:

1. DNPW intelligence and investigations teams collect evidence
2. Evidence transferred to the DNPW veterinary department
3. Decision concerning forensic analysis made by DNPW in conjunction with CVRI
4. Evidence requiring forensic DNA analysis transferred to the CVRI
5. DNA extraction & PCR analysis performed at the CVRI

6. Sequencing performed at University of Zambia by CVRI staff
7. Data analysis and reporting performed at CVRI
8. Forensic report submitted by CVRI to DNPW prosecutions team

Within the remaining six months of the AWFN project there is real potential to assist Zambia in establishing lab capacity and a working operational pathway for conducting wildlife DNA forensic analysis for species identification. It is unlikely that current project support will be sufficient in terms of funding or longevity to fully see through the implementation of capacity in Zambia. However, given the potential observed during the mission for forensic development, in terms of both infrastructure and human resources, it is strongly recommended that resources are allocated to working in Zambia for the remainder of the project.

During CITES COP17, the project team had discussions with the Director of DNPW and the DNPW Acting Head of Intelligence and Investigations. Both interactions were very positive, with both Zambian officials expressing their desire for wildlife DNA forensic services to support national wildlife law enforcement.

### **ZIMBABWE**

Good contacts were made with the Zimbabwean representative during the regional workshop in Gaborone, however, two in-country assessments visits were arranged over the summer months and subsequently cancelled by the project coordinator due to lack of responsiveness and planning on behalf of the national counterparts.

During the CITES COP17, conversations were had with Director of Forensic Science Services of Zimbabwe within Ministry of Home Affairs. Discussions centred on why traction with Zimbabwe has been difficult. He was very positive and enthusiastic, and expressed his desire to work together. He said he would encourage his Permanent Secretary to be enthusiastic about the project.

The project team will again strive to engage with Zimbabwe over the next six months.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

In the opening phase of the project, the Project Team witnessed a strong desire by partners for the project to go ahead. However, the Project Team are coming up against significant inertia at a middle management level, slowing progress to the point where nothing is happening in some countries, and progress is generally slow throughout the region.

The level of social stability in many of these countries means that it is very difficult to get time for people to sign off on project activities. It is difficult to understand whether this is down to lack of time, stability, resources, interest, understanding or all of the above. In response, the Project Team are moving the project in the direction of where we can move things, rather than where we strategically think it's best. Finding ways around this 'brick wall' means changing some of the aims and objectives of the project. For example, Botswana's DWNP are not acting as a great coordinator at a regional level, despite their continuous expressions of commitment to the project there is no follow through. As such, we must move away from Botswana as a regional wildlife forensic service provider for the moment, due to inertia at a national level.

In Gabon and Zimbabwe the political context has led to delays in project implementation. Progress and engagement with Angola and Zimbabwe have been especially slow. While the project team suggest continuing their attempts to engage with Zimbabwe to undertake an in-country assessment visit, it is not suggested to continue making significant efforts to engage Angola.

In the original application, the project team had planned to provide equipment/forensic infrastructure to all project countries (output indicator 3.3). However, having engaged with partners, it is now clear that some countries are not at the stage where providing equipment would be appropriate, namely, Angola, Republic of Congo, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. For example, Namibia does not require equipment since plans for the construction of a new fully-equipped lab are underway, whereas in Congo, providing infrastructure at this stage would be premature since the law enforcement capacity required for forensic infrastructure is too weak at present. The project team would rather use the available funds for equipment and forensic infrastructure in the other countries, where they are most needed and would be utilized. A Change Request Form was submitted in this regard.

**2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

**3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

N/A

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Joanne Gordon at [IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 001 IWT Half Year Report**