

Illegal Wildlife Trade: Half Year Report

(due 31 October)

Project Ref No	IWT 018
Project Title	Developing long-term law enforcement capacity to protect the Mali elephants
Country(ies)	Mali, Burkina Faso
Lead Organisation	WILD Foundation
Collaborator(s)	The Mali Government: Ministry of the Environment - La Direction Nationale des eaux et Forets (DNEF). The US Embassy to Mali.
Project Leader	Dr Susan Canney
Report date and number (eg HYR1)	31 st October 2015, (HYR1)
Project website	http://www.wild.org/mali-elephants/

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).

Summary:

It is difficult to over-estimate the difference the IWT grant has made in providing the initial means for being able to mount the armed response required to act on the information provided by community “brigades” and co-ordinate anti-poaching efforts. It has been extremely timely, providing the essential equipment (vehicles and radio-communications) required to respond to the recent sudden escalation of poaching, just as trafficking networks have started aggressively targeting the elephants. The IWT grant has also encouraged others to contribute and the project is co-ordinating the efforts of several partners, at the same time as working closely with the population to maintain their engagement.

Without IWT’s intervention, Mali would have had no means to operate and no capacity to respond to elephant poaching.

Project Progress:

The project has worked with the Malian government to create 10 new forester posts (5 fixed and 5 mobile) and recruit 50 new foresters to man them, whose salaries and equipment are covered by the government. The IWT have funded additional training for the foresters (completed in September) and the purchase of an advanced radio-communications system (ready for installation in November) and 2 vehicles for anti-poaching operations.

The project has worked with partners to mount an immediate response to contain the situation and prevent it escalating, until the 50 foresters have finished their training and can be deployed. Armed patrols by the Malian army, guided by community brigade members, have resulted in camps used by armed groups linked to poachers being destroyed and provided a strong deterrent for local people tempted to collaborate. In the past poaching has stopped while there has been an armed presence and armed patrols will continue to be a strong anti-poaching asset in conjunction with the deployment of the foresters, particularly given the sensitive security situation in the region. In September the Elephant Crisis Fund granted funds for 3

months of military patrols while the foresters are being trained and to work with them following their deployment.

The project has also been in contact with MINUSMA (the UN peacekeeping force) and UNPOL (the UN Police) as our needs fall within their mandate to protect national heritage, and they are mounting an emergency patrol in collaboration with the Malian army. They have reviewed the military training of the 50 foresters and will supplement it. UNPOL have launched investigations to follow up on the specific information provided by the project Brigades regarding elephant poaching and trafficking.

The project has strong allies within the Malian Parliament in the Parliamentary Committee for the Protection of Wildlife and the Environment, and The Council of Ministers has also been briefed in detail on the poaching situation. The project has launched the process for Mali to become a signatory to the Elephant Protection Initiative.

A census of the elephants took place in June 2015 as part of the Great Elephant Census financed by Paul Allen. Because of the vast spaces involved, and the fact that the elephants cluster in the forest patches surrounding water-holes, the information provided by community brigades was essential to enable the pilot to find them in the short time he had available. The population was estimated at 306, although community brigade members reported seeing additional groups of elephants outside the survey area that the pilot did not have time to visit. The organisation of the census unfortunately meant that the field manager and other project personnel were taken away from project activities (see below).

The following activities from the project timetable have been completed or have commenced and are ongoing:

Output 1: DNEF field foresters able to work with local community brigades to mount anti-poaching patrols, respond to poaching incidences, collect and report required evidence.

Activity 1.1 Construction, equipment and establishment of 10 additional forester posts. **Mostly complete – with a deterioration in security, additional funding is being sought for their reinforcement.**

Activity 1.2 Deployment of 2 vehicles plus protocols of use and responsibility, under the control of the project's field manager working in conjunction with the chefs de service. **Vehicles procured and in place.**

Activity 1.3 Installation of a military state-of-the-art secured radio-communications system in the most vulnerable parts of the elephant range. **Purchased and due for installation in November 2015.**

Activity 1.5 Training of field foresters in working with local communities as part of community activities and ongoing monitoring of performance. **First stage completed; Ongoing.**

Output 2: DNEF at commune, cercle and regional levels able to support ground operations, deliver effective anti-poaching and trafficking operations, collect and keep required data.

Output 2 will be delayed until year 2 or 3 due to the additional effort and resources required to deploy the foresters (see below).

Activity 2.2 Ongoing monitoring of performance to assess take-up and identify further training needs. **Ongoing.**

Output 3: Effective forester presence throughout the elephant range working in concert with homologues in Burkina Faso.

Activity 3.1 Meeting, training course and exchange to establish community-forester anti-

poaching systems with cross-border co-operation and integration of poaching response. ***Established and ongoing.***

Activity 3.2 Follow-up meetings to assess progress, learn lessons. ***Ongoing.***

Output 4: Forester support to local communities throughout the elephant range in resource management for improvement of livelihoods and social and environmental resilience.

Activity 4.1 Local foresters included in community meetings to establish systems of sustainable resource management to give advice and help in organising implementation. ***Ongoing.***

Although the IWT funds have allowed the project to make significant progress in recruiting, training and equipping the government anti-poaching unit, administrative difficulties and ongoing security issues (detailed below) have delayed the deployment of the foresters. In response, the project organised meetings with communities to raise awareness of the gravity of the situation and mobilise the community brigade members to monitor elephant movements and report any suspicious activities. During the meetings the need for community solidarity to counter the links between insecurity, banditry and poaching was reaffirmed, while the community leaders re-stated that anyone killing elephants was a thief as they were stealing from the community. The anti-poaching strategy remains rooted in ongoing community engagement in natural resource management activities.

As a result, no elephants were poached between July and September and brigade members recovered and submitted 13 tusks to the DNEF between April and September. Given that they could have received significant sums of money from ivory traffickers, this is a good illustration of the communities' commitment to the protection of the Gourma elephants. The communities were also made aware that the foresters would soon be deployed for anti-poaching activities and that they would work closely with them, supported by the Malian military, to improve the security for the mutual benefit of people and elephants.

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.

There was a sudden escalation in poaching as a new threat developed in the Gourma: external international trafficking networks were targeting individuals in the elephant range to recruit them as accomplices. The project initially met with some success in stemming the poaching through building local solidarity among local communities backed up by military patrols. However in April, Malian troops were redeployed to deal with attacks elsewhere associated with extremist groups trying to derail the peace process.

At the same time the Mali government was unsettled and carried out two reshuffles in just a few months, with changes in Ministers and frequently at the top levels of the civil service. The leadership of DNEF changed and the preparation and deployment of the new rangers ground to a halt. Unfortunately, these problems at the top levels of the DNEF resulted in the delay in ranger training and deployment. In particular, although the rangers had finished their military training in September, they could not be deployed because they had not received firearms training and had not been given an official legal status.

In response, the project has had to step in to undertake many of the tasks that would normally be the responsibility of DNEF (e.g. organisation of military training, assignment of equipment including firearms, organisation of firearms training, assignment of official status, assignment of radio-frequencies which delayed the shipment of radio-communications equipment), all of which required much time and effort to render the rangers operational. At the same time the project had to organise the field logistics of the Pan-African Elephant Census despite a dysfunctional government.

Therefore, although there have been delays to the timetable, the project is continuing as planned, and co-ordinating allies, partners and support within national and international agencies to remove the administrative blocks relating to forester training and deployment.

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: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance 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:

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

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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. 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**