



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report

Project reference:	IWT -023
Project title:	Securing the gateway: Reducing wildlife trafficking from Myanmar to China
Country(ies):	1: Myanmar 2: China
Lead organisation:	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Collaborator(s):	Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Forest Department, (NWCD)
Project leader:	Dr Alex Diment
Report date and number:	31 October 2018; HYR3
Project website/blog/social media:	http://myanmar.wcs.org https://www.facebook.com/WCSMyanmar/

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

During the first half of the final year of the project, progress has been strong, especially with capacity building work, supporting a longer-term impact of the project. Additional parallel funding has been secured, including a **grant from the UK Embassy** in Myanmar, to leverage IWT resources, and enhance the impact and sustainability the overall program.

With the impending retirement of the existing national Counter Wildlife Trade Coordinator, U Aung Kyaw, we have recruited and now appointed a **new Coordinator**, selecting U Sai Aung Kyaw Win, who comes with over 15 years of experience in work on Transnational Organized Crime, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Myanmar, and is fluent in Chinese as well as Burmese and English. U Aung Kyaw will continue working with the team for a time, to provide continuity for the work.

Key achievements and activities are outlined below, for each of the key outputs:

Output 1. Relevant law enforcement agencies in both Myanmar and China have a detailed understanding of the trafficking networks operating along the trade route to the Muse-Ruili border.

We commissioned a Chinese journalist and investigator to visit Myanmar and do additional research in the border towns, collect evidence and to publicize some of this work in Chinese media. We also completed an investigation in Dali, a large Chinese city near the Myanmar border, which hosts a traditional medicine market, and identified several leads on trafficking networks. We continue to update our local information, and the regional i2 database with additional information on the China side.

We also continue to collaborate with partners, including current and former faculty at the University of Yangon to do research on Elephant trade, and other key wildlife parts. We expect to publish this work in a peer-reviewed publication during the next 6 months.

Output 2. Law enforcement agencies in the project areas have sufficient capacity to identify and prosecute wildlife crimes, and handle the confiscated animals.

Following substantial preliminary work with the Department of Civil Aviation, Aviation Police, and the Airport companies, we were able to work with the MC-Jalux Airport Service Company which manages the **Mandalay International Airport**, to provide an introductory training course on detecting and preventing wildlife crime, delivered in partnership with the Forest Department. We brought a highly experienced former Scotland Yard policeman to Myanmar, to support the development and delivery of this first airport training in Myanmar. Trainees included 83 airport security staff, as well as over 20 government law enforcement agency staff from Customs, Aviation Police, Anti-Narcotics Police, and the Animal and Plant Quarantine Units. Practical sessions included handling live animals, as well as the use of baggage scanners to detect wildlife parts, with numerous training specimens for trainees to view. The training was very well received by participants and government agencies, and provided the foundation for requests from the government and the Yangon Aerodrome Company, for several additional training courses at the **Yangon International Airport**, which will occur in October 2018.

During June 2018, the Myanmar government delivered a campaign of arrests and confiscations of illegal wildlife in the trade, which resulted in the **seizure of more than 2,900 illegal wildlife parts**, from at least 18 different species, and the arrest of 7 key traders. The WCS team provided substantial support to this process, with species identification, handling of confiscated live turtles, which are now being managed at the Turtle Rescue Center.

Along with the Forest Department, and supported by other NGO partners, we delivered training and awareness-raising in Year 2 at the Shwedagon Pagoda, and have done follow-up activities and survey this year, which shows that the training has resulted in the removal of illegal wildlife parts from public sale from this high-profile location in the center of Yangon. Previously eight shops were openly selling ivory, and now it appears that no ivory or other parts are on sale.

On the China side, we delivered full-day **training courses** to the Yunnan Forest Police in **China**, on Combatting the Illegal wildlife trade, with three separate modules, including detecting crime, identifying species, managing evidence, and rescuing live animals. These courses reached 195 front-line law enforcement officers, including 27 who are from Ruili – the town at the main Myanmar-China border crossing.

As part of our broader program, we are supporting the public consultation process for the Rules and Regulations related to the **new Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas law**. The Wildlife Trade team were active in organizing outreach and consultation events, especially relevant as this is now the primary legislation for the implementation of CITES in Myanmar.

Output 3. Law enforcement officers working on the border have the appropriate mechanisms and ability to share actionable intelligence on wildlife trafficking and other transnational crime.

The government's Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Force continues to be the lead agency for our collaborative work; their 6-monthly meeting was held in April (facilitated by WCS). Wildlife crime data for States and Regions was collected via the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, and were presented at that meeting.

Despite the challenging security situation in eastern Myanmar, through our collaborations, we have been permitted access to border regions, and in September, we successfully delivered training, along with the Forest Department and other partners in Kyentong and Tachilek in Eastern Shan State, which has also included exploring the existing transboundary coordination mechanisms in these partially locally-administered regions.

Despite the challenges of transboundary coordination to date, we now have an expert on Transnational Organized Crime leading our team, fluent in Chinese, and with extensive experience of collaboration between Myanmar and China on drugs and other illegal trade, and we anticipate good progress in the coming months.

Output 4. Increased coverage in domestic media of wildlife trafficking issues and wildlife crime prevention successes and failures.

Major achievements here are being delivered through the coordinated awareness campaign, now called "**Voices for Wildlife**", which has generated over 7 million engagements on social media, and over 200 local media articles. We are working with 8 conservation organisations on

this campaign, which has become a broader campaign than it's initial Elephant focus.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Security concerns continue in the key border areas, as outlined in the annual report and change request. We continue to monitor these, and have already adapted our activities to ensure no further changes to budget and timeline are required.

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

Yes, a 1-year extension was granted; this is now Year 3 of the project.

Discussed with LTS: Yes

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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

In August, we organized and hosted a **field visit by Her Majesty's Ambassador** to Myanmar, to visit the project activities at the Turtle Rescue Center, and the Myanmar Forestry School.

We have applied, and been awarded additional **funding from the UK Embassy**, for additional training at border crossings on the handling of live animals, especially turtles. Following our success under this project with the big-headed turtle trade, we plan to extend to additional crossing points, and other turtle and tortoise species.

We continue to **leverage** the IWT funding, with additional funding from the German government and US Government (through GIZ and the USFWS), which are supporting additional components, and will continue after the end of the IWT project. We have also applied for a large EU grant for the region, which would include Myanmar, to support additional work, focussing on illegal poaching and trade in Elephants.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R4 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

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 Victoria Pinion 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 e.g. Subject: IWT001 Half Year Report.**