



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	IWT065
Project title	Strengthening Liberia's response to illegal wildlife trade
Country(ies)	Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Partners(s)	Forest Development Authority (FDA), Liberian Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (LESC), Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF), Conservation International (CI), Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP), Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL)
Project leader	Sarah Gluszek
Report date and number	29/10/2020, (HYR2)
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/strengthening-capacity-illegal-wildlife-trade-liberia

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).

Output 1: National and regional political commitment to combat IWT is enhanced through better coordination and collaboration within Liberia, which creates a more enabling environment to respond to and prevent IWT of focal species in Liberia and across its borders

Activity 1.1 was successfully completed in Year 1 and the national strategy document from the stakeholder workshop has been circulated to the core partnership group for input. An additional three Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (LESC) meetings were held (Activity 1.2) half via Zoom and half in an office on the 27 May 2020, 9 July 2020 and 13 August 2020. We also attended two meetings with the Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF) on 3 and 24 July 2020. During these meetings, ongoing wildlife crime cases across the country and WCTF member coordination were discussed. In regards to regional transboundary coordination (Activity 1.3), the Transboundary Law Enforcement Technical Committee (TLETC) meeting for Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo was organised via Zoom on 7 July 2020 to discuss and validate the transboundary action plan at the national level. Furthermore, on the 31 August 2020 the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) received information from their counterpart in Guinea, Centre Forestier de N'Zérékoré (CFZ) that two elephants had crossed the border from Guinea into Liberia, concerned about their safety as they often approached villages, raiding crops, on the Guinea side. Since these initial reports, the elephants have been moving between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and authorities in Côte d'Ivoire Ministère des Eaux et Forêts (MINEF) have also been collaborating with FDA and CFZ. This collaboration is a positive indicator of improving relationships and proactive communication between the three countries. As a result of shared information, a joint team of rangers from Guinea and Liberia was set up to ensure the elephants have been tracked on the Liberia side and awareness raised amongst communities to prevent incidents of human-wildlife conflict. FFI in collaboration with partners on the Species Working Group Liberia (SWGL) have set up a temporary coordination platform, an Elephant Emergency Committee to coordinate the tracking of the elephants and provide technical advice in addressing issues such as human-elephant conflicts, to enable protection of these elephants and other elephant populations in Liberia, in the wake of recent elephant killings. Reports of this

story have been covered by Front Page Africa (<https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/rare-sighting-of-forest-elephants-from-guinea-brings-renewed-hope-for-elephant-conservation-in-liberia/>) and FFI (<https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/elephants-without-borders-transboundary-collaboration-brings-hope-west-africas-wildlife/> and <https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/west-africa-walkabout-adventures-elephant-brothers>).

Activity 1.4 is planned for the second half of Year 2.

Output 2: Targeted law enforcement authorities have strengthened capacity to plan, monitor, and respond strategically to illegal wildlife trade within Liberia and across its borders in coordination with neighbouring law enforcement authorities.

Activity 2.1 was successfully completed in Year 1 and was used to inform the design of the suite of training modules on IWT (Activities 2.2). These modules will be delivered by consultant WildCrime in the upcoming two-week national training sessions planned for the 16-26 November 2020, and will include pre- and post- training surveys (Activity 2.3 and 2.6). Due to travel restrictions, this training has been adapted to be delivered remotely by pre-recording presentations, which enables the training to be translated and be more accessible to transboundary stakeholders. As identified participants are limited by access to computers and the internet, they will still gather in Monrovia, however with smaller numbers than initially planned for and with additional Covid-19 safety measures in place. Under Activity 2.7, 63 joint security personnel and judiciary have already been trained on Liberian wildlife law in Year 1, as well as another 63 personnel from Sapo National Park and the Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologezi (ZWW) landscape on SMART and CyberTracker training, against the target of 100. Two individuals have been identified to receive additional applied support and official approval has been gained from the FDA to begin Activity 2.8. An additional 22 personnel from Sapo received a refresher training in SMART in 17-20 June 2020 (Activity 2.10), and regular co-ordinated patrols have been ongoing in Sapo and Wonegizi despite Covid-19 restrictions (Activity 2.11). Several coordination meetings were held with park management in Wonegizi (Lofa) and Sapo to discuss problems faced and plan patrols. Constant Ndjassi, IWT Technical Specialist for Liberia, designed a 2 km² grid map to improve ranger deployment and protected area coverage. The grid associated with the implementation of SMART, will help strategic planning.

Activities 2.4 (training for magistrates), 2.5 (sharing modules with UoL and FTI) and 2.12 (training for confiscation unit) are being delivered in the second half of Year 2. Activity 2.13 (strategic deployment of confiscation unit) will begin following the creation and training of the centralised database (Activities 4.1 and 4.2). Activity 2.9 (supporting the trainees in Activity 2.8 to train a further two individuals) is planned for Year 3.

Output 3: Dissemination of information on wildlife laws and sanctions provides an enabling environment that promotes compliance by the public and increases the likelihood of public/informal engagement with IWT detection and reporting

Activity 3.1 was completed in Year 1 and materials, including posters and flyers, have been distributed at market places in Monrovia and at Ganta and Zorzor border points with Guinea (Activity 3.2). 2000 flyers of protected species were printed by partners under the LESC and distributed at market places in Monrovia during the World Chimpanzee Day. Leaflets were used in Monrovia instead of posters because previously we have found that posters have been removed in locations where they were posted around Monrovia. 55 copies of the 2016 National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law and amended 2012 Penal Law on Environmental Crime were printed for distribution with the Wildlife Crime task Force (WCTF) across Liberia National Police divisions and Magisterial courts in Careysburg, Monrovia, Paynesville, Gardnersville and Brewerville from 17-18 and 23-24 September 2020. Posters of Liberia protected species were also distributed for awareness raising among the police and Ministry of Justice personnel. For rural areas, species-specific posters, e.g. 300 copies of chimpanzee posters, including facts about the western chimpanzee were printed under this grant and the deployment is ongoing along the Liberia-Guinea border and around Sapo National Park. Elephant posters carrying facts about elephants, and conflict mitigation messages have also been designed and will be printed and distributed in communities across the transboundary area in Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire to create awareness about elephants, in relation to the two elephants migrating across the landscape. Additional posters were distributed to a palm oil company in Sapo after information was shared from a company

employee that an individual had illegally captured a bushbuck. The employee informed the suspect that this was not allowed and contacted the Chief Park Warden, suggesting the potential role of private sector in wildlife protection and employees as source of information. Planning for two billboards is underway: one location has been found near the Ganta border and is being commissioned with partners by setting up a board and will be displayed for one year; a second location is currently being discussed.

Monrovia airport reopened in July 2020, and as planned, a poster in lieu of the mural was placed in the Departures Terminal in Monrovia international airport from September 2020 for one year, co-financed by LCRP (Activity 3.3). Lower numbers of travellers due to Covid-19 travel implications reduces level of exposure, but will still raise awareness amongst airport staff.

Under Activity 3.4, radio shows raising awareness were organised nationally with ELBC on 14 July 2020 (on World Chimpanzee Day) and locally with Voice of Gompa in Ganta and Radio Sehnwai in a local language, on 5 and 6 September 2020 respectively. A radio show was also organised locally with Radio Nimba on 4 and 8 September 2020, with daily repeats of key messages from the show for the following two weeks, about the elephants crossing the border from Guinea into Liberia. Statistics from these shows indicate that 20,000 listeners tuned in to Radio Nimba (with no radio callers) and 400,000 – 500,000 listeners across the country for ELBC radio (Activity 3.5).

The communications plan for the project was updated based on responses from the baseline surveys, which were resumed once restrictions were lifted and completed in August 2020 (Activity 3.6).

Output 4: Improved IT infrastructure and systems promote accurate, transparent and secure data management, enabling analysis and rapid responses to IWT detection by law enforcement agencies

To date under Activity 4.1, a template of key information has been drafted, using data collected from arrest records, confiscation records and incorporating data heading required for the TWIX database. Most information is collected by rangers (patrol data) and police (arrest data, although this is not always systematic or comprehensive). A basic system for collecting and uploading information directly to a central FDA coordinator, who collaborates with the Ministry of Justice, will be discussed with the partners and developed in the second half of Year 2. A meeting was organized with partners on 24 June 2020 to discuss the database design and the role of each organization.

Activity 4.2 (IT infrastructure and training) is also planned for the second half of Year 2. Activity 4.3 (enforcement baseline data) was completed in Year 1 and will be compared in the following years under Activities 4.4 (collate enforcement effort) and 4.5 (analyse national database - once the national database is established).

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

At the Wonegizi Proposed Protected Area three FDA rangers have gone back to University (which could last up to four years), meaning that there are only four rangers left in Lofa. This, in addition to ongoing issues with FDA ranger salaries, has limited law enforcement capacity. To ensure that limited staff are utilised in the most effective way, grid map planning for strategic deployment will be used and is underway by Constant Ndjassi, IWT Technical Specialist for Liberia (see Activity 2.11 above). In addition to this, as patrols are supported by community rangers, we expect that this will have no or minimal direct impact on upcoming project activities.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of

project activities.

Despite the coronavirus outbreak, our project activities have not been severely impacted. The lockdown started on Saturday 11 April 2020 in Liberia. Most activities planned for Year 2 were delayed (such as the installation of the airport poster, site-based training on SMART, distribution of awareness raising materials), but were resumed once lockdown restrictions were gradually lifted. One point to note is that because of the global impact on the aviation industry, the poster in the airport may have been less impactful as a tool to raise awareness to the general public, however its messaging is still visible to airport staff and some travellers. Other activities, mainly the national wildlife crime and database training sessions, were initially postponed and have now been adapted to be delivered remotely with a smaller number of participants in-country. Even though this means that a smaller number of people will be trained, as these modules will be pre-recorded it will allow for easier translation and future distribution at a transboundary level. This change was discussed with LTS as some budget spend in Year 1 had to be refunded (e.g. for flights), and approved to be spent in Year 2.

Some transboundary meetings have been postponed or held online, and we are still hopeful that they can still go ahead if it becomes safer to travel and organise group meetings, if not then virtually. For example, the transboundary meeting initially planned for the Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi Landscape was not held. The joint patrol planned in May 2020 between CFZ and FDA rangers in Wonegizi was also cancelled due to Covid-19.

We also want to draw attention to an increase of miners entering Sapo National Park as a result of the outbreak, similarly to that seen during the Ebola crisis. This project has been improving law enforcement capacity and public awareness, but Covid-19 still poses additional obstacles to reducing poaching levels and has also led to reduced patrols because of limited technical and logistical support caused by travel restrictions.

2c. 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

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance N/A

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: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

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

No.