



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

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	Simon Burdett
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	29/10/21 HYR3
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.

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 completed in Year 1, however the latest draft strategy document has continued its validation by stakeholders and will be ready for use before the project end. Under Activity 1.2, we have attended an additional 2 LESC meetings hosted by Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) on 20 May 2021, with 19 attendees (3 women; 16 men) from 12 Institutions and on 2 September 2021, with 22 attendees (5 women; 17 men) from 13 institutions. With regards to enabling informed and coordinated action acting on regional intelligence (Activity 1.3), FFI, Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP) and WCF supported FDA teams to conduct Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF) missions in the North-western landscape where 2 elephants were killed adjacent to the Wonegizi Proposed Protected Area (PPA). One of the suspects escaped but was intercepted in Guinea by rangers of the Ziama Man and Biosphere Reserve. The WCTF also intercepted wild meat smugglers in Bomi County, central Liberia, (see <https://www.liberianobserver.com/fda-sen-botoe-kanneh-clash-over-bushmeat>). Forestry and wildlife rangers from the three countries Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire via the Elephant Emergency Committee continued this year to track the two elephant brothers migrating from Guinea to Cote d'Ivoire through Liberia (hence two existing transboundary taskforces/committees are coordinating and effectively generating, sharing and taking action). Activity 1.4 is planned for February 2022.

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

Activities 2.2-2.3 were completed in Year 2, and will be translated into French before the project end to share with law enforcement personnel in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Regarding Activity 2.5, we met with the Forest Development Authority (FDA) Conservation Department to discuss the feasibility of including the IWT training modules as a syllabus at the University of Liberia and Forest Training Institute. This process is ongoing and depending on the internal procedures at each institution to incorporate new teaching components, may not be fully achieved before project end. However, the resources will be made available for short courses at the FTI academic ranger programme. Further post-training assessments developed under Activity 2.6 were conducted between 15 and 17 July 2021 to assess impact on law enforcement capacity following the training delivered in Year 2. Working with the WCTF we distributed 41 forms to different law enforcement organisations including security personnel, judiciary and custom officials. We have renewed the contracts for two FDA officers from May to December 2021, who were nominated and formally seconded to participate in a mentoring programme (Activity 2.8). For supporting trainees to become trainers of 2 further individuals in the subsequent year (Activity 2.9), Ms. Trokon Grimes and Mr. Jimmy Parker have been supported to pass on their learning to other staff at the FDA. During this period, FDA ranger teams have been continually equipped and deployed on regular, coordinated patrols in Sapu and Wonegizi (Activity 2.11). Under Activity 2.12, we have identified 4 FDA personnel from the Confiscation Unit to be trained on IWT database management in November-December 2021. Output 4.2 was updated following a change request in April 2021 meaning that Activity 2.13 instead focused on supporting WCTF missions, investigations and collaboration with customs, judiciary and police. In May, August and September 2021, mentored and seconded FDA staff supported missions to Nimba alongside the FDA Confiscation Unit to deliver conservation awareness messaging (Activity 3.2) where 3 children from the local communities were injured by chimpanzees.

Activities 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.10 were completed in Years 1 and 2.

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

Under Activity 3.2, we published an article in the IWTCF newsletter entitled “A strategic coalition of NGOs and Government bodies tackling wildlife crimes in Liberia and its transboundary countries” (see <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/assets/uploads/sites/3/2021/08/IWT-Newsletter-August-2021-More-Valuable-than-Gold-FINAL.pdf>). Although most awareness raising materials were distributed in Year 2 (Activity 3.2), we further shared these materials on WCTF missions (see Activity 2.13 above) and renewed the mural painting located at the FFI Liberia office to further promote awareness of conservation along the central road in Monrovia. This was co-funded by Leventis Foundation, the Arcus Foundation and FFI's Species Fund Projects. Activity 3.6 will be repeated before the project end to monitor outreach impact and changes in perceptions since the baselines were collected in Years 1 and 2.

Activities 3.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 were completed in Years 1 and 2.

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

We have made substantial progress with the development of the IWT database. Building on the template drafted in Year 2 (Activity 4.1), we have been continually reviewing and testing several forms with partners for improved data capture. These forms are accessible online and through a mobile app. In August 2021, we supported the FDA to apply for access to ESRI's online software to use for the IWT database (Activity 4.2), which has now been approved. We have also been coordinating with ESRI to deliver training on the use of the software and to manage an IWT database, and have now contracted ESRI to deliver this training in November-December 2021. Activity 4.3 was completed in Year 1 and will be repeated before the project end to compare with the enforcement baseline data (under Activity 4.4). Activity 4.5 will be collated before the project end.

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.

Despite considerable progress, a lesson learnt for Output 4 is that more time should be factored in to develop a multi-stakeholder data input, management and reporting system between different government and non-government actors plus the various protocols and coordination required and the complications of sharing information whilst ensuring sufficient confidentiality. As we discussed with LTS on 2 August 2021, the project has a clear plan for Output 4 and an embedded 'plan B' to continue to develop an in-house reporting system in the unlikely scenario that an ESRI database, 'plan A', cannot be used by the FDA as online software to hose the IWT national database. Plan A is progressing.

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.

We have adapted our project activities to follow COVID-19 guidelines, for example the training of the IWT database managers will be delivered remotely, and to avoid having too many people in the room, some participants (with access to laptops and the internet) will also be trained remotely.

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/No
Formal change request submitted:	Yes/No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No/Not Applicable

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?

-