

## Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Final Report

### IWT Challenge Fund Project Information

Project reference	IWT065
Project title	Strengthening Liberia's response to illegal wildlife trade
Country(ies)	Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Partner institution(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).
IWT grant value	£400,938
Start/end dates of project	01/07/2019 - 31/03/2022
Project Leader's name	Simon Burdett
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/strengthening-capacity-illegal-wildlife-trade-liberia">https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/strengthening-capacity-illegal-wildlife-trade-liberia</a>
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**N.B. do not publish any annexes – that includes annexes within this document – except: Annex 1, Annex 2 and Annex 3 can be published. Do not publish annex 4, contact details.**

Please see Annex \_Acronyms for some abbreviations used in this report.

### 1. Project summary

Liberia's transboundary forests especially the Northwest and Southeast forest landscapes cover more than 40% of the remaining forest blocks within the Upper Guinea Rainforest. It is home to threatened and endemic species, including IUCN Red-listed and CITES Appendix I species such as vulnerable white-bellied (*Phataginus tricuspidis*), black-bellied (*Phataginus tetradactyla*) and giant (*Smutsia gigantea*) pangolin, endangered Timneh parrot (*Psittacus timneh*), critically endangered African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*); endangered pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*); and critically endangered western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*). These species are facing serious decline across their range due to habitat loss, habitat degradation and unsustainable levels of exploitation for pet trade and trade in wild meat and animal products. Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has worked with national and local partners over the last three years to address illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in Liberia and transboundary areas. Regionally there is an increasing focus on coordination of efforts across neighbouring countries, which may serve as sources of transit routes. With the support of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTTCF), FFI continues to raise the profile of Liberia's biodiversity and the impact not only on Liberia's wildlife, but also the country's role in wider West African IWT efforts; and to catalyse systemic change by increasing national capacity, improving governance and pushing for tougher responses, before the trade intensifies further and multiple species are lost.

This project entitled **Strengthening Liberia's response to illegal wildlife trade**, has aimed to address the current threatened state of wildlife species by empowering key players with tools, skills, knowledge and commitment necessary to tackle and handle responses to IWT. It has focused on strengthening Liberia's law enforcement capacity by improving coordination to address national and transboundary IWT, strengthening intelligence gathering and enforcement capacity, increasing public awareness; and developing data management systems to guide responses.

This final report presents the progress achieved during the 3-year period, from 1 July 2019 to March 2022.

The project is implemented by FFI with the support of IWT Challenge Fund, UKAID with co-funding from other donors, in particular the AG Leventis Foundation. It covers the entire country as well as the transboundary forest areas with Guinea (Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi - ZWW landscape), Ivory Coast (Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo – TGKS landscape) and Sierra Leone (Gola landscape) (Figure 1).

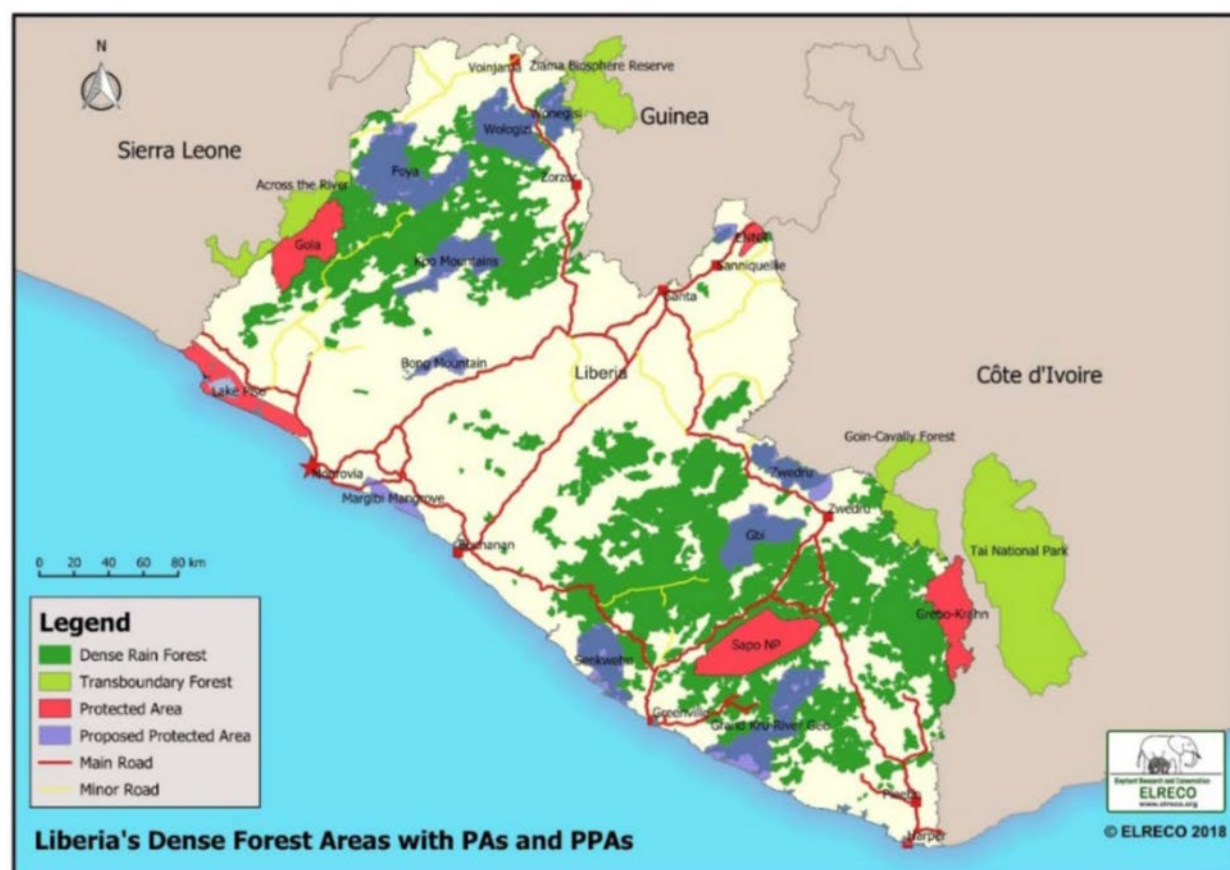


Figure 1: National and transboundary forest landscapes needing protection.

## 2. Project Partnerships

Building on the context of existing good working relations with stakeholders and partners, and funding (notably USAID-West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change programme), a transboundary MoU was signed in October 2019 between Guinea and Liberia concerning the ZWW landscape (Annex 0.1).

This project led by FFI, has worked in partnership with the Forest Development Authority (FDA), Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (LESC) of the Species Working Group Liberia (SWGL), Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP), Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF), Conservation International (CI), Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) and in collaboration with Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary (LiWiSa) and multiple governmental agencies involved in addressing IWT and who are part of a Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF). Project partners have been involved in strategic and project planning from the outset (e.g. Annex 1.1.1), are in regular communication, and, depending on the specific intervention and/or site, are involved in decision-making. For example, WCF led an EU funded IWT project that supported the establishment of the WCTF and LCRP played a key role in leading a female-led awareness programme with support of the British Embassy in Liberia. CI led the revision of the National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management law of 2016. Alongside FFI and WCF, LCRP supported two Liberian government officials, (the Managing Director of FDA and the Commissioner of

Liberia National Police for Criminal Services, Department and Criminal Intelligence Division and Interpol Affairs of the Liberia National Police,) to attend the EnviCrimeNet General Assembly of environment with a focus on “Current actions in the fight against illegal wildlife trade in Western and Central Africa”, held in Madrid, Spain from 16-17 and 26 November 2021 (Annex 1.4.1/2/3).

The members of the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (LESC) meet on a monthly basis with both physical and virtual meetings and keep in touch by email, WhatsApp and phone calls. An update is given at every meeting of partners’ activities. The LESC, a sub-committee of the Species Working Group Liberia (SWGL) also forms a platform where information is shared with non-project partners. It is important to note that the LESC serves as the platform through which IWT activities are implemented collaboratively. The WCTF was formed in 2019 and is made up of the FDA and other law enforcement and security agencies, as well as the two sanctuaries that receive and provide care for confiscated animals, LCRP and LiWiSa. The WCTF presents updates to the LESC and partners provide support for IWT activities to be implemented by the taskforce through this forum. Other committees also support wildlife related activities, for example, in both 2021 and 2022, two elephants crossed from Guinea into Liberia on their migratory routes, crossing over to Ivory Coast and back to Liberia. The Elephant Emergency Committee (made up of some of the project partners, FFI, LCRP and WCF, and additional organisations such as Elephant Research and Conservation (ELRECO) was set up to provide funding and technical advice for the protection of these elephants.

Besides the national and regional partners, some external bodies like the UK Embassy and European Union Delegation played a major role by providing diligent guidance, attending the LESC meetings throughout the project, and providing funds to implement IWT missions and awareness activities.

### 3. Project Achievements

#### 3.1 Outputs

**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.**



**Figure 2: IWT transboundary workshop for law enforcement officials, N’zérékoré 23rd-26th March 2022; Photo credit FFI**

Liberia now has a draft 5 year national strategy for combatting wildlife crime and an operational plan for 2020-2024 (Annex 1.1.2/3) that is in the process of being validated by government institutions (Indicator 1.1 & 0.1). Other ‘inter-agency protocols and dataflow systems’ outputs are Wildlife Crime Task Force

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protocols (Annex 1.1.4) and a Liberia IWT-Data flow diagram (Annex 4.1.3) both of which have been vital to increase collaboration and coordination.

National coordination is strong with ongoing and regular LESC meetings and despite the passage of the Liberian Wildlife Law (2016), regulations to that law - stipulating fines and penalties - are still to be finalised and disseminated publicly (current status is that a revised law has been sent to parliament for an amendment) (Indicator 1.2). In any case, the Wildlife law was reviewed and recommendations made (Year 1) and existing regulations were shared in various media, used for raising awareness within communities (Output 3) and law enforcement agencies (Output 2).

As mentioned in section 2, FFI and partners facilitated an international exchange in Madrid for two Liberia government personnel (Indicator 1.4). Furthermore, a delegation of three persons (2 rangers from Sapo and Wonegizi and 1 FFI staff) represented Liberia for the first time at the 5-day World Ranger Congress in Nepal in November 2019 where important themes were discussed: Communities engagement and protected area gazettelement, Technology, Rangers association, capacity building, welfare, female rangers and indigenous rangers.

Regional collaboration has been enhanced through the agreement of an MoU (Annex 0.1.1) between Liberia and Guinea and transboundary exchange meetings with Guinea and Ivory Coast. These have resulted in improved coordination between government agencies across Liberia's borders. The migration of two elephants along the landscape between Liberia and Ivory Coast saw quick and collaborative responses from authorities on both sides to protect this focal species from potential IWT. The improved coordination was seen after the killing of elephants in Lofa, Liberia in September 2021, where Guinean officials subsequently arrested the suspected perpetrators across the border and requested documentary evidence from their Liberian counterparts. Lesson learning opportunities from this incident were maximised at an international exchange at the end of the project in Guinea with 22 Liberian and Guinean law enforcement officials (Indicator 1.4, Annex 1.4.4/5/6/7, Figure 2). The capacity needs in terms of obtaining and processing evidence to prosecute cases of wildlife criminality were further clarified (Annex 1.4.5). This workshop produced the following joint, transboundary recommendations:

- Capacity building of staff assigned to address illegal wildlife crimes on laws, prosecution procedures, wildlife species
- Transboundary platforms to enable continued exchanges on wildlife cases
- Harmonising transboundary operations and strategies
- Community awareness-raising about wildlife laws

These strategic goals are in-line with the design of this project, which has contributed, in part, to their practical application in both ZWW and TGKS transboundary landscapes. A third meeting of the Transboundary Law Enforcement Technical Committee for the TGKS Forest Complex took place between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia (Annex 1.3.1) and as mentioned above the ZWW MoU (Annex 0.1.1) between Liberia and Guinea has seen practical implementation. Thus two existing transboundary taskforces/committees are coordinating and effectively generating, sharing and taking action (Indicator 1.3).

## **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.**

Initially, a capacity needs assessment was carried out to inform training needs, with personnel from the FDA, National Fisheries & Aquatic Authority, Transnational Organised Crime Unit, Liberia National Police, Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency, Ministry of Justice, INTERPOL, Liberia Revenue Authority and Immigration Service (Indicator 2.1, Annex 2.1.1).

A national suite of training was developed and delivered to joint agency personnel in November 2020 (Activity 2.2/3, Annex 2.3.1). The impact of the training is already being seen. A WhatsApp group that the participants set up during the first week of the training continues to be active to communicate operational issues. In early December 2020, an incident occurred when two elephants that had crossed into Liberia from Guinea and were being attacked by community members. The FDA could not reach the area and used the WhatsApp group to appeal for assistance or interventions from the police until they could arrive. A police commander who was part of the course immediately deployed officers to assist.

Further activities in curricular development, training delivery and capacity building to improve planning, monitoring and response have occurred with various state agencies including in SMART and CyberTracker patrol information systems and how to apply them (such as Annex 2.2.1) and involved both Liberia and Guinean law enforcement personnel, in response protocols (such as Annex 1.1.4).

Equipment for rangers was supplied and a vehicle was purchased for the Wildlife Unit (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: UKAID-funded vehicle purchased for the Wildlife Unit of FDA; Photo credit FFI**

Out of 30 trainees regarding wildlife crimes, eighteen law enforcement authorities from FDA and Liberia National Police, have been trained in addressing wildlife crimes and IWT database management. Two FDA staff received mentorship to address IWT and have been supported to disseminate their learning to additional FDA colleagues.

In July 2021, FFI supported a WCTF mission held in Western Liberia (Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties)( Annex 2.13.1), whereby the WCTF team members collaborated with customs officers, judiciary and police on a wildlife crime case in Bomi, resulting in a conviction (Annex 0.4.1). In May, August and September 2021, an FDA seconded staff member accompanied the FDA Confiscation Unit to Nimba County for separate cases of human-chimpanzee conflict.

After the project, the national training modules are in the process of being incorporated into University of Liberia (UoL) and Forestry Training Institute (FTI) teaching syllabus for longer term and ongoing capacity to respond to IWT in Liberia. FFI is also planning to translate key training materials into French for use in neighbouring countries.

Law enforcement authorities in Liberia have improved capacity to respond to wildlife crime. The project has increased capacity and has enabled better equipped, trained patrols to report on their activities. In Liberia, law enforcement activities throughout the life of the project are shown for Sapo (Figure 4) and Wonegizi (Figure 5), with an existing SMART-based patrol system and database available in Sapo.

## Sapo

105

5,547

3,083

Number of Patrols

Distance (km)

Person - Days (All)

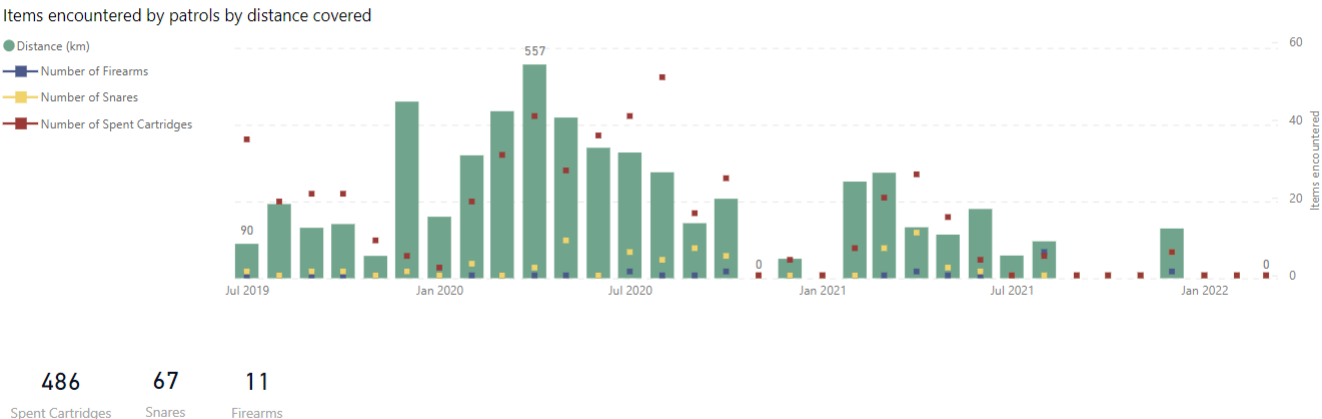


Figure 4: Patrol Data for Sapo National Park

## Wonegizi

223

11956

2611

Number of Patrols

Distance (km)

Number of Patrol Days

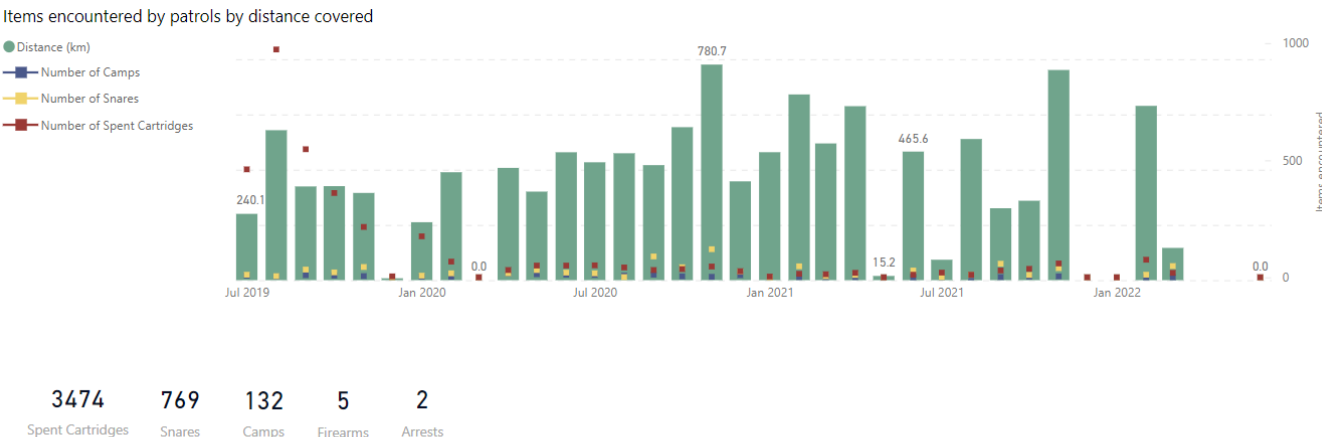
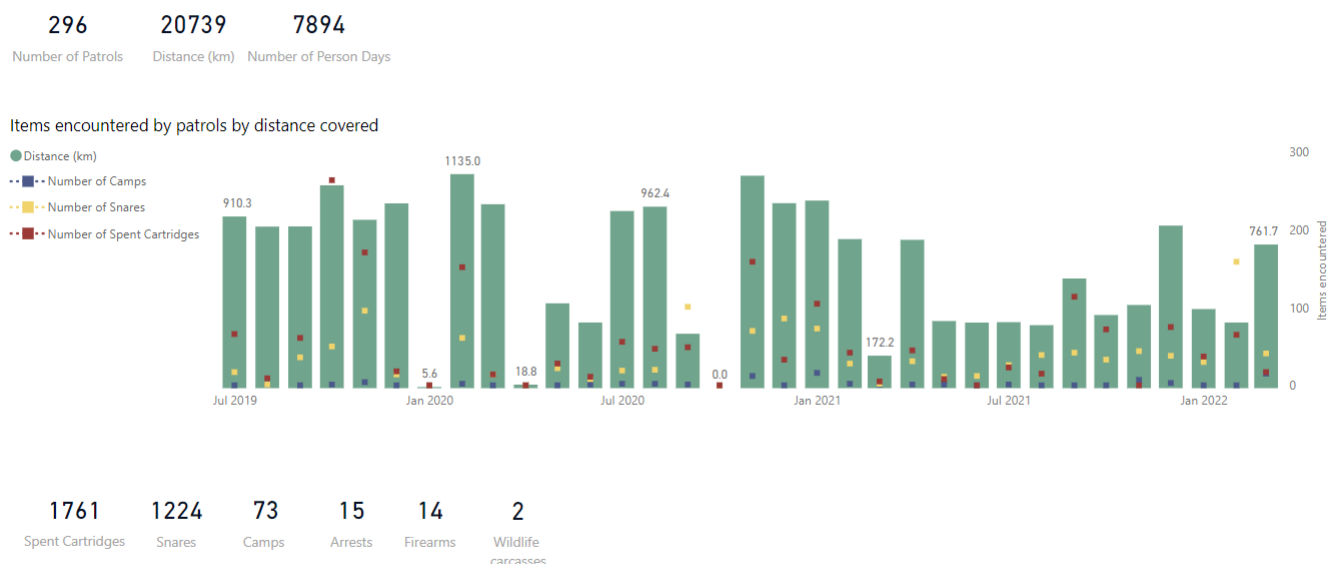


Figure 5: Patrol Data for Wonegizi Proposed Protected Area

Additionally, SMART data reporting systems have also been maintained in Ziama (Figure 6) and the project has supported progress towards standardisation of reporting (see section 3.2)



**Figure 6: Patrol Data for Massif du Ziama Biosphere Reserve**

Comparing across all three sites, Sapo National Park has recorded the least coverage and number of patrols, despite being the largest of all three sites. This is mostly due to issues related to an aging ranger workforce in Sapo, Liberia's foremost and largest protected area, with only 25 out of 64 rangers fit enough to patrol and covering an area of 180,360 ha. In Wonegizi on the other hand, being a proposed co-managed protected/conserved area, patrols are supported by community volunteers (24), augmenting the number of rangers (12) covering an area of 27,594 ha.

### **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**

A suite of campaign materials was produced (e.g., posters/billboards/murals) that provide informational messages on IWT and promote public engagement in reporting, and was distributed strategically across 70 communities and 19 transboundary and border points, including an airport and 14 markets (Indicator 3.1). Various media were successfully employed and messages delivered in communities (Annex 3.3.3 for an overview), and some directly with IWT personnel involved in awareness campaigns and at strategic sites – such as the IWT awareness campaign around Gola National Park (Annex 3.3.4). From the baseline recorded in 2020 (Annex 3.3.1) and repeat surveys in 2021 and 2022 (Annexes 3.3.2/3) various methods were used to analyse results (survey/questionnaire, interviews, and observations). Indicator 3.2). Further radio and TV coverage was evident in other years (e.g. Annex 1.4.7).

521 people were engaged during at least three public opinion surveys (Indicator 3.3). The survey in year 1 was curtailed by Covid-19, however during year 2 and 3 the number of sites surveyed increased. In Year 1 (baseline survey) 44 respondents were interviewed. In Year 2, 156 persons were surveyed. In Year 3, 261 people (194 women; 67 men) were surveyed in 8 repeated locations (2 from Year 1; 7 from Year 2 and 8 from Year 3). An additional 60 people were surveyed in Year 3 (Buchanan County) meaning a total of 321 people were surveyed in Year 3. (See Annexes 3.3.1/2/3).

Although some awareness changes were inconclusive (and activities were affected by Covid too) there were some clear measurements made. Regarding the knowledge about illegal hunting and selling wild animals: In Year three, about 80 % of respondents were aware that it is illegal to hunt or sell protected animals (66.9% in Monrovia, 85% in Lofa, 87.5% in Nimba). The impact is positive compared to 79% in Year 2 and 9% in year 1. Concerning the effectiveness of wildlife laws, 39.2 % of respondents believe that wildlife laws are effective, while 60.7 % believe on the contrary that the laws are not being followed and implementation is not very effective. There is a positive impact compared to Year 2 whereby 21.3 % said that wildlife laws are effective.

A willingness to report IWT is anecdotally shown in Year 3: several people brought wildlife species to the FFI office (1 pangolin, 3 pythons, 1 infant mangabey, 1 iguana. These species were subsequently reported and passed onto the FDA, LCRP and Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary).

#### 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

The first national database to hold centralised IWT data in Liberia has been set up and is managed by the FDA. Data collection forms have been developed, first patrols trained and most of the equipment shared. 30 staff have been trained on wildlife crime data collection for the database, including 5 staff trained as IWT database users in the aspects of database management and production of reports (see examples in Annex 4.1.1/2). While the forms and dashboards are now finalised and have been officially launched, it is acknowledged that more training is needed to ensure uptake and ongoing usage. There were some delays due to discussions around data collection forms and the set-up of the database however test data and some data from incidents has been collected to help design and develop the database and the basic structure and input methods and forms are set up and key staff trained. The next steps are to expand data input to enable meaningful reports to be produced by FDA. The database hosting platform is assured for 10 years from set-up (2021) and FDA officially owns and controls the data – Indicator 4.1 - a centralised database, housed within the FDA. However, the full indicator, that the database “...is continually populated and analysed by trained staff from at least four law enforcement agencies in Liberia, providing secure, transparent data to inform dynamic national IWT action, by the end of Yr3” was not fully achieved as the training was carried out towards the end of the grant. However, the database is housed and managed under the Wildlife Confiscation Unit of the FDA, which is the unit responsible for arrests and confiscation of live animals and products. The database therefore provides a valuable tool that will enable reporting, storage and management of IWT data going forward. The first step planned by the team is to transfer already existing data from an MS Excel database on to the online database.

There is, therefore, a need to maintain and improve the approach in order to make this tool effective and useful to responding to wildlife crime. The database has two main levels currently – law enforcement incidents and sanctuary information, an example of the former is shown in Figure 7 and contains sample data only. It is also automatically linked to the latter, when rescued animals are sent to a sanctuary (Figure 8).

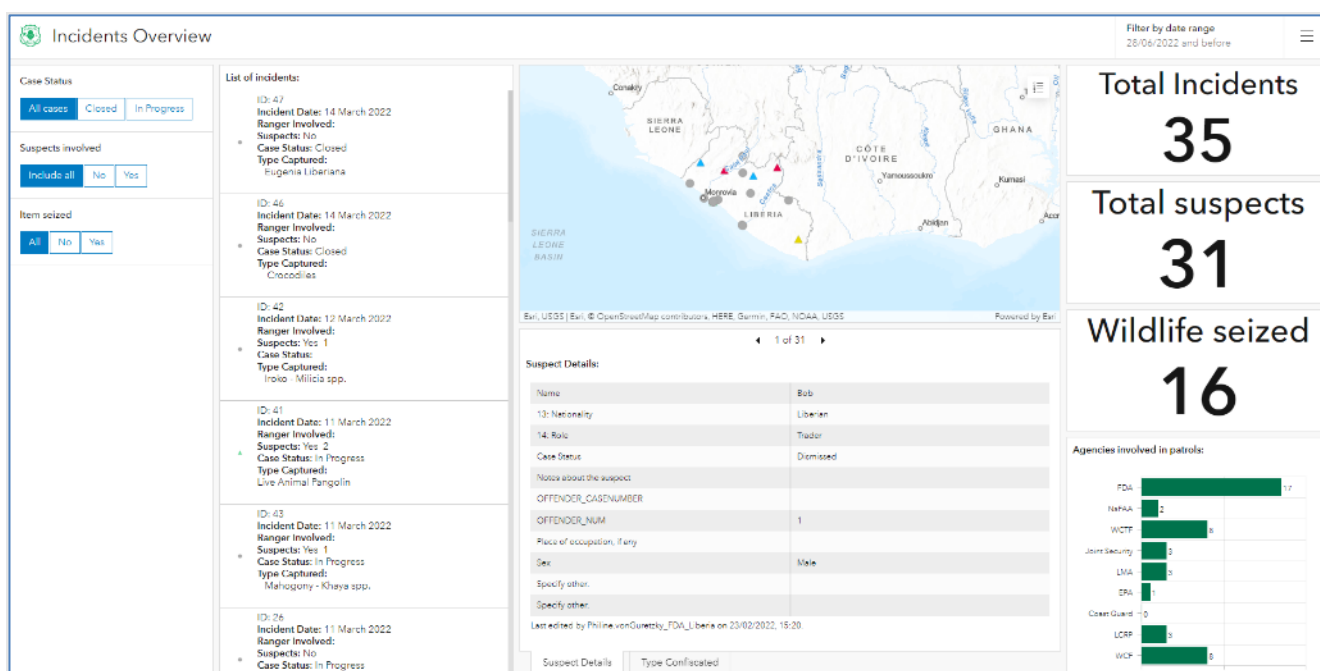
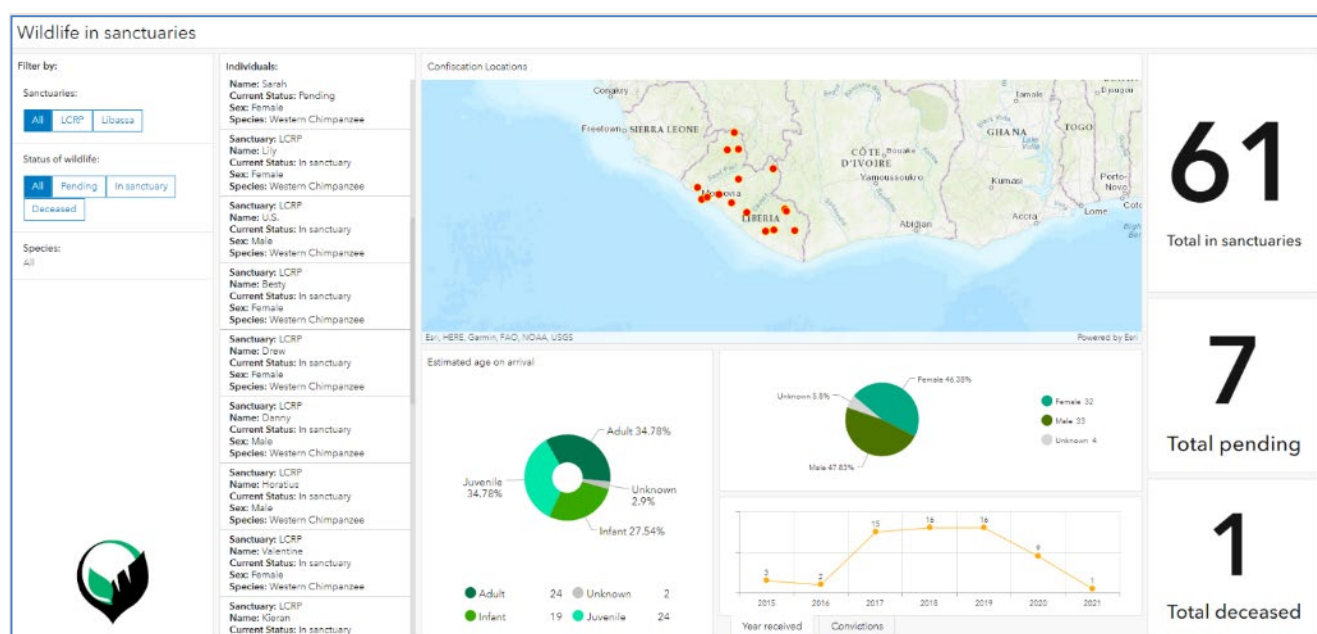


Figure 7: Dashboard view of the new IWT database and its Incident Reports

Figure 8 shows an example overview of all live animals within LiWiSA and LCRP Sanctuaries Through these efforts and collaborations, both government and non-government organisations, and their coordination mechanisms, have a solid basis on which to build comprehensive monitoring and responses from prevention, detection of crime and responses including eventual release of rescued animals back into a safer environment.





**Figure 8: Dashboard view of the new IWT database and its Sanctuary Reports**

FDA, who can count on future FFI and other partners' support, would need to enable collaboration with other state agencies for their inputs into the database and their receiving of timely data and reports upon which responses can be based (Indicator 4.2).

Monitoring and evaluation of available data is possible from site-based patrol data, that the project enabled under Output 2, and pursued as an 'in-house' solution in the case that the national database would not be fully operational by end of project. Thus, referring to Figure 4, 5, 6, and summary, Figure 9 and Table 1 below. Sapo patrols being lowest while being the largest area is concerning – this is critical information that can strategically inform field missions (Indicator 4.2).

**Table 1: Site-based Patrol Data Summary (July 2019 – March 2022)**

	Number of Patrols	Distance (km)	Spent Cartridges	Wire Snare (Trap)	Firearms
<b>Sapo Total</b>	105	5547	486	67	11
<b>Wonegizi Total</b>	223	11956	3474	769	5
<b>Ziama Total</b>	296	20739	1761	1224	14
<b>Total from SMART data</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>38241</b>	<b>5721</b>	<b>2060</b>	<b>30</b>

## 3.2 Outcome

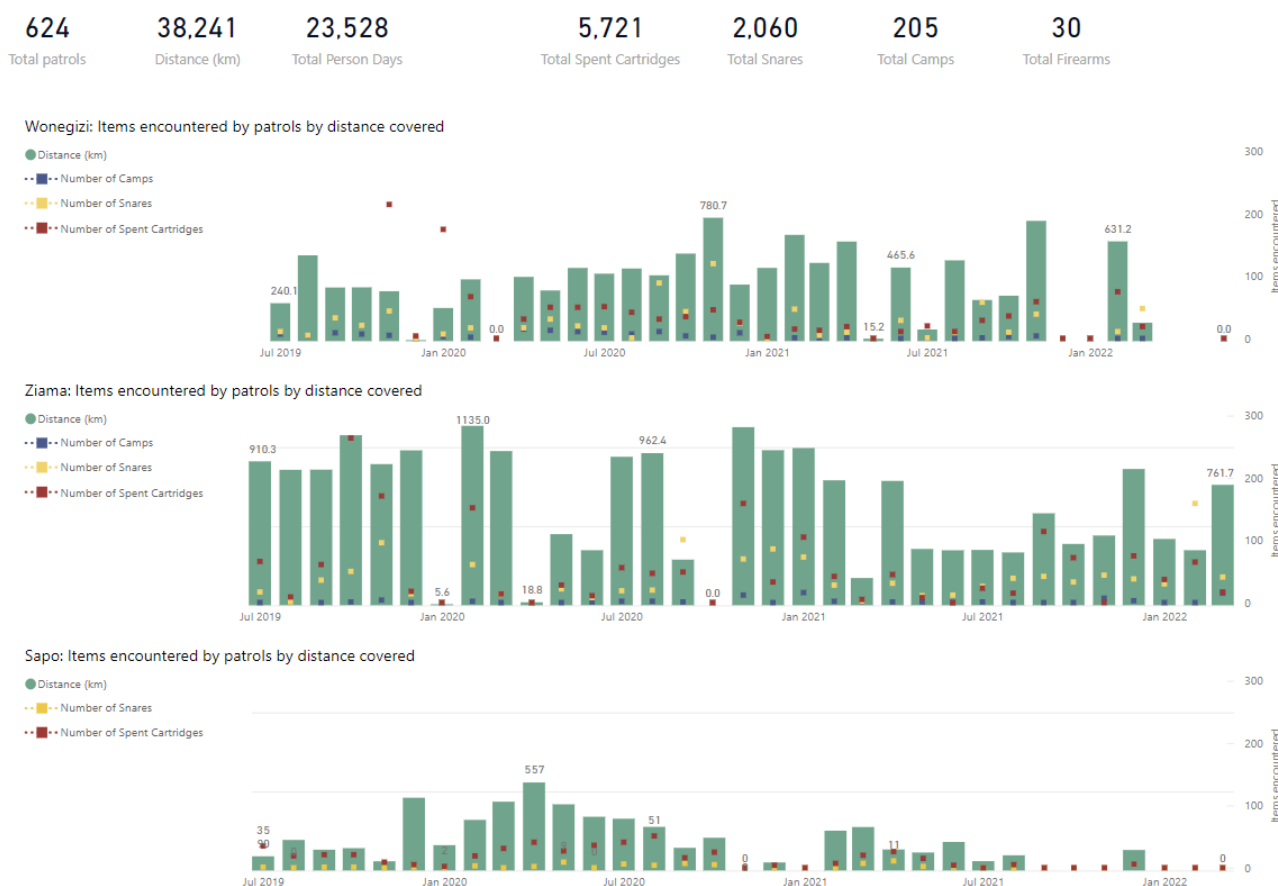
**Outcome:** Liberia has improved capacity to tackle IWT nationally and with neighbouring countries at its international borders, thereby disrupting trade routes and leading to reduced trade threats to focal protected species.

Over the three years of this project, progress has been made towards building stronger law enforcement capacity, targeting actions at all levels.

- Regionally, through a Guinea-Liberia transboundary accord (see section 2 and Annex 0.1) which was maintained and culminated in an exchange workshop between the two countries (see section 3.1, output 1) - Indicator 0.1. Year 3 showed a practical implementation of agreements signed in Year 1 through a fruitful participative transboundary exchange workshop held in Guinea whereby participants

committed to setting up strategies in order to improve the collaborative mechanisms, including agreeing the timing for some operations and procedures to observe in cases of wildlife crime.

- A high level of collaboration and coordination has evolved during the project, with three Mano River Union countries – Liberia, Ivory Coast and Guinea collaborating on the protection of two migrating elephants during Years 2 and 3.
- Nationally, several wildlife and security agencies and institutions strengthened their collaboration and coordination efforts between Year 1 to Year 3. A Liberia 5 year national strategy document and operational plan for 2020-2024 (draft) has been developed by multiple stakeholders – Indicator 0.1 (Annex 1.1.2/3).
- Capacity building activities aiming to improve patrols and IWT data collection have positively contributed to recording of or seizure of a number of IWT related tools and methods and in general to improved patrol information (Indicator 0.4, Activity 4.4). Overall there have been significant seizures and confiscations however there is some variance partially attributed to the effects of the COVID-19 on patrols in year 2 and data is not yet systematically centralised. Available data (from sites and specific missions) indicates 617 specimens have been confiscated and 103 live animals were rescued, 315 poaching camps destroyed, 2,060 snares removed and 30 firearms confiscated. There have been 88 arrests and 15 prosecutions reported.
- Although hard to prove, it is believed that 'At least 50% of trained enforcement personnel report applying new skills to address IWT, from baseline assessment to end Yr3 (Indicator 0.2) due to having engaged and trained 126 enforcement personnel (year 1) with 63 rangers equipped, trained in, and applying SMART skills in Sapo, Wonegizi and Ziama (in Year 2 and 3). The evidence for this is shown by the SMART data being available to report, and is summarised in Figure 9: Patrol Data Summary for 3 sites (Wonegizi, Ziama & Sapo)- [note, this data excludes some specific other mission data].



**Figure 9: Patrol Data Summary for 3 sites (Wonegizi, Ziama & Sapo)**

- Furthermore, inter-agency collaboration to record, report and respond has been improved through the set-up of a viable national IWT database (see section 3.1, Output 4). The SMART patrol data can feed into the database, and in the meantime provides an alternative, in-house system for FFI and FDA which enables better site protection planning and reporting.

- Local level awareness raising activities, which led to positive attitudes among community members. Anecdotal reports from Sapo and Wonegizi indicate that some community members do report wildlife crime to rangers, leading to arrests - 93% of respondents to a survey in 2020 were willing to report illegal hunting and sale of protected animals (Annex 3.3.1). The Indicator 0.3 (50% of people surveyed across the targeted IWT campaign distribution zones can recount information gained from exposure to targeted messaging) requires a complex measurement and analysis of what is in fact many messages and media used by the project. Some results indicate above 50% e.g. “64% of respondents have either seen posters/listened to adverts on the radio (jingles) at different locations in Liberia” whereas other measures are below 50% e.g. protected species recognition from flashcards but 9% of people surveyed being able to recognise the 3 species of pangolin found in Liberia could be viewed as a positive figure (see Annex 3.3.1). However, awareness assessments demonstrate clear progress: of 321 respondents across 13 sites including markets and border points, 75.6% stated they are aware of regulations on hunting and selling of protected animals – this was 9% in Year 1 (Activity 3.6).

### **3.3 Monitoring of assumptions**

The Outcome-level assumptions were:

1. Target agencies remain willing to collaborate and share information
2. Political stability.
3. Political will is maintained.
4. National and international legislation governing wildlife trafficking are not weakened.
5. Corruption is managed and does not hinder efforts to disrupt wildlife trafficking.
6. Seizures, investigations and prosecutions are conducted and followed through.

All of these assumptions still hold true. However, the extent that prosecutions are followed through to the end is not always clear and is difficult to document adequately. There is one clearly documented prosecution in the final year (Annex 0.4.1). The capacity to do this though has been decisively supported by the project through the set-up of a new database and IT structure with trained personnel.

The project has also decisively contributed to the creation of monitoring tools such as the draft Liberia Combatting Wildlife Crime Strategy and Operational Plan (Annex 1.1.2/3) and to an overview of ‘IWT data flow’ in supporting improved IT infrastructure and systems (Annex 4.1.3). These products will enable onward monitoring of assumptions and frameworks for understanding what needs to change to make further progress.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused some delays or required adaptations in implementing project activities, for example by organising virtual meetings. In the second half of Year 3 there were no strong restrictions on physical gatherings or travel, so, in-person meetings and campaigns could go ahead. See section 11. Impact of COVID-19 on Project Delivery.

### **3.4 Impact: achievement of positive impact on illegal wildlife trade and poverty alleviation**

Impact: Pangolin, parrot, chimpanzee, elephant and other species at risk of illegal killing and international trade are protected by stronger enforcement systems in Liberia and the wider region.

The whole project has continued to contribute to the impact, building on the systems and structures established.

Training and mentoring of enforcement officers has occurred on multiple levels and sites, notably the suite of IWT training modules for law enforcement agency personnel at national and transboundary levels has been delivered with security staff operatives now trained with the skills to tackle wildlife crime. Strengthened law enforcement capacity in the country through training, and support for coordinated efforts, culminated with the set-up of an IWT database which contributes to strengthening the country’s ability to respond to and combat wildlife trafficking.

This Year 3, awareness assessments demonstrate clear progress: of 321 respondents across 13 sites including markets and border points, 80% stated they are aware of regulations on hunting and selling of protected animals – this was 9% in Year 1, and 79% in Year 2 (Activity 3.6). The Government Institutions and partner organisation will use such information and experience moving forwards. They will organise and set up further awareness raising events across the country, in order to help to increase knowledge of wildlife related laws and regulations, which will impact positively on the response to IWT.

Regional collaboration was sustained not only with remote communications to manage different cases of elephant migration and crime related (Activity 1.3) but also with a coordinated response by the three countries of the MRU, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Liberia in the protection of two elephants crossing the MRU

from Guinea (Activity 1.2/1.3); FFI and partners were able to support the LESC and FDA to secure funding to carry out the required interventions and operations. Sustained regional collaboration also benefitted from the law enforcement exchange workshop held physically in March 2022 (activity 1.4).

The project has contributed addressing poverty; securing and strengthening the integrity of wildlife and protected areas, leads to sustenance and improvement of ecosystem services that benefit local people. Furthermore, an improved strategy to address IWT while promoting community involvement, as it is the case for this project, has impacted communities positively as community members are more willing to report instances of wildlife crime to the FDA and FFI.

Through this project, FFI and partners have been empowered to intervene together on some very challenging circumstances and incidents which aim at achieving greater harmony between human rights and obligations, rangers and protection of conservation areas, species and the prevention of IWT.

FFI has also produced a publicly shared document FFI\_2020\_Position-on-rangers-and-human-rights (see section 6).

#### **4. Project support to the IWT Challenge Fund Objectives and commitments under the London Declarations and Kasane Statement**

To date, this project has supported the IWT Challenge Fund Objective to **strengthen law enforcement**, and the 2018/2014 London Declarations (LD) and 2015 Kasane Statement (KS) by:

- Developing regulations for implementation of the National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management law, and creating awareness among law enforcement personnel on the law (LD18: 9, 14; KS15: 4, 5; LD14: VIII, X, XI, XIII, XIV, XVI).
- National collaboration among agencies, through the signing of a MOU between FDA and MOJ, strengthened regional level collaboration to promote better coordination of action through a national training programme, reflected in the coordinated response to the protection of migrating elephants across the Mano River Union (Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire) and a national strategy for combatting wildlife crime in Liberia (LD18: 9, 15, 16, 18; KS15: 3, 7, 12, 14, 15; LD14: X, XI, XIII, XIV, XVI, XIX, XX).
- Raising public awareness of species conservation, IWT impacts and consequences to engaging in wildlife crime, with messaging communicated on radio shows, posters, and at events (LD18: 7, 13, 20; KS15: 1, 12; LD14: I).

#### **5. Impact on species in focus**

The project is impacting focal species by ensuring the efficient deployment of patrols and systematic data collection in Sapo National Park, which has the largest population of chimpanzees in Liberia, and in the ZWW landscape where pangolin trade across the Liberia-Guinea border has been reported. This will enable better monitoring of wildlife populations and the IWT threat they face. Improved enforcement will enhance deterrence of offenders from poaching and trafficking, effectively reducing the IWT threat on focal species.

The project has strengthened enforcement agencies' ability to enforce legislation and develop, investigate and prosecute wildlife crime cases, and by training enforcement personnel on IWT database management, including data collection and production of reports, providing IT equipment for the database, and through coordinating, harmonising and setting regional strategies to combat wildlife crimes

During the period April 2021 – March 2022, 1 elephant has been rescued from poaching and it is now safe nearby a ranger post in Wonegizi (Figure 10), 1 pangolin, 1 Mangabey, 2 Pythons were reported by communities to FFI which transferred them to Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary.





**Figure 10: Infant elephant rescued in Lofa, by FDA alongside FFI and other partners, February 2022; Photo credit FFI**

There has been a positive impact for certain species and in threat reduction: 617 specimens have been confiscated and 103 live animals were rescued, 315 poaching camps destroyed, 2,060 snares removed and 30 firearms confiscated. There have been 88 arrests and 15 prosecutions reported.

It is very difficult to attribute impact on species directly to the project, however the combined actions in communities, in markets, at borders, with partners and state agencies has undoubtedly raised the profile of laws and practices conducive to the conservation of protected species. A good example are the posters that were displayed at Monrovia International Airport (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Billboard displayed at Roberts International Airport, Departure Terminal

## 6. Project support to poverty alleviation

This project contributes indirectly to poverty alleviation for the entire country in general, and for communities neighbouring the protected areas. In three years, the project has improved regional and national capacity to address IWT to sustain wildlife populations as key indicators of biodiversity in forested ecosystems. Healthy forests are imperative for sustained ecological services upon which humans depend, and provide important resources that contribute to community well-being and livelihoods. Support provided through this project to strengthen law enforcement at the protected areas creates an increased sense of security to communities, who are working closely with park management to provide and report information on wildlife crime, for example in Sapo National Park and Wonegizi PPA. In addition, different ecosystem services which benefit the communities are maintained due to increased natural resource protection.

Increased awareness helps to increase understanding of the consequences of IWT, including the risk of disease outbreaks which could result from poor management and control of wildlife trade and this can have severe impact on people and their livelihoods, as suggested by the COVID-19 outbreak and previous zoonotic disease outbreaks such as the Ebola virus outbreak which affected Liberia several years ago. The health and well-being of a population contribute to the livelihood conditions and economic development of the country. By increasing public awareness, enhancing inter-agency and cross-border collaboration, and national capacity overall, the project has hopefully also contributed to reducing negative health and economic impacts caused by zoonotic disease transmission.

FFI recognises the links between IWT, law enforcement, human rights and impacts on people and in 2020 released a public [position paper on rangers and human-rights](https://www.fauna-flora.org/app/uploads/2021/03/FFI_2020_Position-on-rangers-and-human-rights.pdf)<sup>1</sup>.

## 7. Consideration of gender equality issues

Throughout the project, gender has been considered within activities as much as possible, with the recognition that the roles, perspectives and experiences of women and men in IWT can differ. A conscious effort was made to include women in training activities, workshops, surveys and assessments as much as possible. Between April 2021 and March 2022, 19.4% of those trained, 71.3% of respondents during the awareness surveys and on average 19% of those attending LESC and transboundary exchange meetings were women. The communications strategy developed in Year 1 considered gender-relevant messaging and platforms that would best reach targeted audiences, whether men, women, consumers, vendors, traffickers or hunters. In addition, 50% of the project partners leading IWT related projects and activities (including FFI) are female.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fauna-flora.org/app/uploads/2021/03/FFI\\_2020\\_Position-on-rangers-and-human-rights.pdf](https://www.fauna-flora.org/app/uploads/2021/03/FFI_2020_Position-on-rangers-and-human-rights.pdf)  
IWT Final Report Template 2021

## 8. Sustainability and legacy

**This project has established a strong foundation for effective and coordinated response to address wildlife trade in Liberia and within the Mano River Union.** Assessments and trainings carried out for law enforcers **will enable the Liberian government to establish baselines for the country and continue monitoring the impact of efforts to address IWT.** Tools, protocols, agreements and action plans developed, such as **the 5-year National Strategy** and National IWT database, will help guide actions to address wildlife crime even after this grant comes to an end. FFI has new, and is expecting more, projects and funds to further support the implementation of the national strategy and database. Recently secured funding from the Rockhampton Zoo will support the validation and launch of the Liberia Combatting Wildlife Crime Strategy developed under this project. **The outcomes of the training** both at site- and national-levels **will progress beyond the lifespan of this project.** This project's achievements were attained in collaboration with government and conservation organisations at national and regional level. Collaborations both nationally and regionally have gained traction and hopefully will continue to be maintained. Skills acquired, plus the related mentorship and training of the trainer approach will help to create a culture amongst personnel to maintain learning, so that knowledge can be passed on to colleagues. The project also established a permanent SMART based patrol programme at all three sites which this grant supported. This tool can be used at these sites for long-term for monitoring and patrolling purposes and continues beyond project lifespan. The coordination platforms and working groups that the project also continue with state and non-state partners.

The project has empowered the Liberian and the wider West African aims to reduce IWT. ECOWAS member States have recently adopted the Abuja Recommendations on the Development of a Coordinated Counter Wildlife Trafficking Response in West Africa (March 2022, proposed in 2018, Annexes 0.1.2/3) and Liberia is on the steering committee.

A West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime Steering Committee, comprising representatives of Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Niger, Gambia, Liberia and Guinea Bissau was appointed to coordinate future work on behalf of the subregion in this regard.

## 9. Lessons learnt

A number of lessons have been learnt during the third year, but most worthy of note among the positive outcomes is the learning from strong coordination among partners and government agencies. This project has been collaborating with several partners to support the government in addressing IWT and align objectives and targets. Getting all partners working on IWT to coordinate their response has been immensely valuable for building buy-in and traction for activities, as exemplified by the article we published in the IWTCTF newsletter in August 2021<sup>2</sup> (Annex 3.1.5).

In terms of recommendations for future similar projects, the following general points are pertinent to consider:

Time: it takes a lot of time to bring together a variety of stakeholders, state/non-state, local, national, transboundary... in constructive working relations and partnerships; and it takes

Effort, and even more time, to keep momentum going; and needs

Funding: longer-term funding to support this – 3 years is too short – plus the actual costs of regular patrols are huge (and not funded by this project) so a combination of funding, state, global and various mechanisms are needed to protect habitats, species, reduce IWT while addressing the root causes of poverty.

### 9.1 Monitoring and evaluation

To monitor the impact and effectiveness of FFI's awareness raising activities, an on-going (annual) survey on awareness raising materials was implemented during this project, targeting communities, markets and border points, to record their knowledge and understanding of the 2016 National Wildlife and Protected Area Management Law, protected species and to understand the issue of sourcing wild animals for human consumption as a threat to Liberia's biodiversity (Output 3). The results from the surveys helped to monitor changes in public knowledge of wildlife laws, protected species and means for reporting wildlife crime, they will be used for further strategic and activity planning. This helped to measure the level at which knowledge and skills in IWT protocols and tools improved during the awareness campaigns. To monitor

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/assets/uploads/sites/3/2021/08/IWT-Newsletter-August-2021-More-Valuable-than-Gold-FINAL.pdf>



the impact and effectiveness of IWT activities within the protected areas and elsewhere in the project working areas, baseline data has been collected and stored by FFI and project partners LCRP, WCF and the FDA to monitor overall progress towards the Outcome, by comparing annual figures of public reports, seizures/confiscations, arrests, prosecutions and convictions. The availability and quality of these data is also an indicator in itself, as the project develops national capacity to collect, manage and report these types of data (see for example figures: 7, 8 & 9).

## 9.2 Actions taken in response to annual report reviews

The activity 4.2: Provide IT infrastructure and train specific IT support personnel within FDA for sustainable database housing and management, as reviewed in Year 1 and Year 2; was implemented in Year 3. Furthermore, FFI working with FDA and CFZ, is now able to produce SMART data reports as an 'in-house' solution, while further, longer term initiatives are pursued by FFI and partners – notably the operationalisation of national coordination and information systems under Output 4.

## 10. IWT Challenge Fund Identity

The project acknowledges the UK government as a donor by displaying the UKAID logo on project materials. The logo is normally used on banners, during workshops and other events and on IWT awareness materials such as posters, fliers, and billboards to ensure adequate visibility in line with the requirements of the UKAID communication guideline. The logo is also placed on equipment such as laptops purchased under the project. Support from Defra's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund has also been widely publicised both verbally and in writing among partners and stakeholders during meetings, in press releases and radio programmes, and is visibly displayed along with the UKAID logo on the wildlife celebration event's materials including banners and clothes.

There is a general understanding of the IWT Challenge Fund's strategic contribution amongst institutions working to address IWT in Liberia.

## 11. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

The impact of COVID-19 has affected the project whereby gatherings of people and physical meetings were not permitted e.g. The public survey in year 1 was curtailed. However, towards the end of the project, these the measures were alleviated and we were able to conduct awareness campaigns, surveys and meetings in person.

The project responded by holding more meetings and training / workshops online where possible and FFI also hosted events (rather than at government agency offices) so that better internet connections could be accessed by participants.

A good example was the Joint Agency Training course to Counter-Wildlife Trafficking delivered in November 2020 (Activity 2.3, Annex 2.3.1) where the following adaptation was noted:

The training courses took place in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, severely limiting the opportunity for both travel and gathering of participants. The officers within Liberia, and partners based in the country, were allowed to gather in the same training room for the duration of the course, with precautions. The international trainer was not able to travel. To overcome these restrictions, lectures were pre-recorded, practical exercises pre-planned, and discussions facilitated by FFI Liberia staff. The international consultant joined the group live twice-daily via the online meeting facility, Zoom, to describe and debrief exercises, facilitate discussions and address questions. The arrangement worked flawlessly, and despite the limitations, did not impede the learning and networking experience for the participants.

## 12. Finance and administration

### 12.1 Project expenditure

#### a) Year 3

#### Project expenditure Year 3 (April 2021 - March 2022)

Project spend (indicative) since last annual report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual IWT Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)



Staff costs (see below)				
Travel and subsistence				See below
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Consultancy costs				See below
Others (see below)				
Overhead Costs				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

#### Explanations for variances greater than -10%

Travel and subsistence was underspent due to Covid restrictions and due to holding some events and training sessions on-line.

Consultancy costs (E04, Translation fees) for Transboundary Collaboration were not used (hence variance) – for the transboundary meeting in March 2022, there were sufficient FFI staff who could interpret in French and English. The translation of documents for transboundary collaboration remains a needed activity – but the budget was not able to cover a consultant sufficiently however onward projects are, and FFI in-house capacity and practices, are developing very well in this regard.

#### b) Over the whole project period

Movements between main budget lines were minimal for example Consultancy costs, minus in Year 2 and moved to Staff costs for Year 3.

The only variance of concerns for travel and subsistence – and is fully reasonable due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic causing restricted travel. Consultancy Costs were reduced (-10%) and the main reason for this was transferring budget to Staff costs enabling greater 'in house' support to Database Development and Training (under output 4) and as per March 2021 approved Change Request.

#### Total Project Expenditure (July 2019 – March 2022)

	2019 - 2022		
	Year 1 – Year 3	BUDGET	Variance
Staff Costs			
Travel and subsistence			
Operating Costs			
Capital Equipment			
Consultancy Costs			
Other Costs			
Overhead Costs			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)

Capital items – description	Capital items – cost (£)
Database Development Infrastructure Cost	
Vehicle	
Ranger Equipment	
Projector	
Laptop Project Lead	
Laptop Intern	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

Other items – description	Other items – cost (£)
Bank Charges	
Recruitment Costs & Work Permits	
Stationary and Printing	
Printing for IWT Outreach Campaign	
Telecoms and IT costs	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

## 12.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Source of funding for project lifetime	Total (£)
AG Leventis Foundation	
Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund	
West Africa Biodiversity & Climate Change program (USAID)	
UK Embassy in Liberia	
Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection	

ESRI (10 year licence to FDA for hosting of data platform)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

Source of funding for additional work after project lifetime	Total (£)
MIKES+ project / CITES Secretariat <sup>3</sup> (\$75,000 USD)	
Rockhampton Zoo Australia (Combating Wildlife Crime)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

### 12.3 Value for Money

has gone a long way. In under 3 years, it has, albeit with additional funding – which it has also helped lever – mobilised and energised many state law enforcement agencies towards reducing IWT and facilitating a Liberia IWT strategy and operational plan, developed sustainable partnerships, significantly improved skills and practices of rangers and other personnel and raised awareness in the region and enhanced transboundary coordination. Progress has undoubtedly been made towards Liberia having the capacity to tackle IWT nationally, and with neighbouring countries.

FFI and other donors have provided funding of staff and partner time that was well beyond this project's budget. The 10-year licence granted to FDA by ESRI to host the national database is further evidence of value for money. Both indicate that Defra's funds are effectively supporting mutual aims of global importance.

### 13. **OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes**

I agree for the IWT Secretariat to publish the content of this section:

There are two major outstanding achievements.

One is the establishment of the National centralised database for wildlife crime which is hosted by the Government of Liberia represented by the Forestry Development Authority – FDA. This database will enable the systematic collation of data on IWT. IWT data in Liberia involves information gathered from different source sites (in various protected areas), transiting hubs and routes internally and across borders, and sanctuaries where confiscated wildlife are sent to. By providing the infrastructure and training to systematically input and manage data in a centralised database, a more complete understanding of IWT in Liberia can be gained, which can help to inform future strategic interventions. Learning from the process to establish such a database can also be shared within the Mano River Union and internationally to promote wider replication. The establishment of this national database, alongside improved collaboration with Guinea, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, also opens the possibility to encourage information sharing at regional level in the future.

The second achievement is developing regional-level, transboundary cooperation and collaboration. Building on the accord between Guinea and Liberia, capacity-building events and exchanges there is an emerging 'transboundary' approach to tackling IWT and crime, and a set of recommendations which can be actioned in ongoing partnerships and projects across all the Mano River Union countries.

#### **Images for Defra communications**

See Annex 3.1.4. Same as Figure 11: Billboard displayed at Roberts International Airport, Departure Terminal, developed with UKAID, IWTCF, project ref IWT065

See Annex 3.1.5, page 4, (already supplied to IWTCF) for photo of two elephants whose monitoring and protection during their transboundary migration was enabled through this project (see sections 2, 3.1, 3.4).

<sup>3</sup> Minimizing the Illegal Killing of Elephants and other Endangered Species Plus  
IWT Final Report Template 2021

## Checklist for submission

	Check
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk">IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk</a> putting the project number in the subject line.	N
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk">IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the subject line.	Y
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, <b>do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 13)?</b>	Y
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Y
<b>Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number.	N
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Y
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Y
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	