



Image Credit: Planet Indonesia

# Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poverty

## Introduction:

This information note provides guidance for both project and applicants to the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund. IWT is driven by a range of factors, one of the key drivers is poverty. At a basic level, poorer communities can be drawn in to poaching and trafficking because of economic deprivation and a lack of alternative livelihoods. However, the relationships between poverty and IWT are complex and multifaceted.

Poverty goes much deeper than just economic deprivation; it can also mean a lack of power, prestige, and voice, and an inability to define one's future. Effective strategies to tackle IWT require recognition of the complexities of motivations of people engaged across the whole chain of supply, transit and demand in IWT, as well as how specific political-economic-social contexts shape the trade. IWT is also gendered both in terms of patterns of involvement and in its impact on communities. These factors will shape the range and nature of successful approaches to tackling the trade.

This Information Note covers the different ways projects can approach the question of defining poverty, its relationships to IWT and how projects can address both poverty and IWT. It also identifies best practices in addressing poverty across the four themes of the fund.

## Summary of Key Messages

This information note has been developed to support IWT Challenge Fund projects and applicants understand what is meant by poverty reduction and how they can consider its broader contexts.

We wish to encourage a wide range of projects to the IWT Challenge Fund that directly and indirectly address poverty in all its forms. Using the advice and tips included in this information note will help to ensure that, whatever the focus of your project, poverty benefits are clearly identified, captured and reported upon.

### Top Tips:

- Consider wider poverty benefits than simply the economic benefits of your project;
- Ensure your application clearly considers the context in which your project will work in and outlines the poverty benefits that will result from your project if funded and any potential risks;
- Ensure you are engaging with local communities in a participatory way when designing the project;
- Include on your team (or at least consult with during application writing) a development expert;
- To ensure robust project design, consider more complex definitions of poverty reduction and its overlap with sustainability, value for money, monitoring and evaluation and appropriate skills and expertise.

## Defining poverty:

Within their application, all projects are asked to consider the context in which the project seeks to work in, and this should include an explanation of how poverty is understood in the project. Projects are encouraged to think beyond economic deprivation in their approach to tackling poverty. This can include an indication of how the project understands the complexity of motivations for people engaged in IWT across the chain of supply, transit and demand. Doing so will assist projects in co-designing locally appropriate projects. Beekeeping, tourism, handicraft production, Village Savings and Loans schemes or poultry farming are all common in projects that aim to develop sustainable livelihoods.

***Addressing poverty as part of an IWT project is not only about economic deprivation, developing livelihoods or identifying the key measure of poverty. It is also about defining who is poor, why they are poor and understanding inequalities within communities bearing in mind intersecting characteristics such as race or ethnicity, caste or class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, etc.***

***Addressing poverty includes access to health and education, and development of better living standards. This way of understanding poverty encompasses empowerment, giving voice and ability to shape one's life choices.***

See Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom* (Oxford university Press)  
; Alkire, S. and J. Foster (2011) 'Understandings and Misunderstandings of Multidimensional Poverty Measurements' *Journal of Economic Inequality* 9(2): 289-314.

Poverty encompasses a range of diverse issues that are required to fulfil basic needs and better one's life with dignity, which are often country and context specific.

This list is not exhaustive but provides examples of some of the challenges facing the world's poor, particularly with regards to biodiversity.

- Lack of access to resources including food, water, energy, land
- Lack of infrastructure such as transport which hampers access to markets, hospitals, schools, ports, airports etc.
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitation
- Lack of access to services including education, healthcare, finance etc.
- Loss of ecosystem services causing instability such as water security, food security
- Climate change impacts causing instability
- Poor governance including the lack of community voice in decision making, and a lack of gender equality



Image Credit: Fernando Carniel Machado

All projects are encouraged to consider whether their project can approach poverty reduction in more expansive and creative ways that address multidimensional deprivation and injustice. In order to do this it is essential to engage with key communities and stakeholders from the design stage; doing so can help develop more creative, locally relevant and effective strategies

## **Best practices for poverty reduction strategies for your IWT Challenge Fund project:**

The following section sets out the different ways in which project design can address poverty. The section covers points relevant for all projects funded the IWT Challenge Fund.

More specific points are also included as key considerations the four IWT Challenge Fund thematic areas.

The IWT Challenge Fund thematic areas are: Demand Reduction, Legal Frameworks, Law Enforcement and Sustainable Livelihoods.

## **All project considerations:**

All projects funded under the IWT Challenge Fund should consider the following points when designing their approach to poverty reduction. The points outlined below are directly related to the criteria the IWT Advisory Group (IWTAG) review applications against, please see the Guidance for Applicants for full breakdown of scoring criteria.

**The IWT Advisory Group (IWTAG)** are a group of independent experts in IWT and poverty reduction that provide strategic advice, assess proposals and make recommendations to Defra on funding decisions. For further information please see the [Advisory Group](#) page on the website.



- **Definitions of poverty:** All projects should consider the context in which they are working in and ensure the design of the project is appropriate for this context. This should involve an understanding of how the project will impact poverty including any potential the project may have in exacerbating poverty as a result of its interventions. All projects are encouraged to consider a more expansive definition of poverty beyond income to reflect this. Strong projects will define poverty more expansively to encompass more than economic deprivation and will include status, voice and ability to shape one's own life choices. Weaker projects will define poverty narrowly in terms of economic deprivation and design strategies that reflect this.
- **Define the link between poverty and IWT:** All projects are required to have a clear explanation of the links between poverty and IWT and be clear about whether the links are direct or indirect. For example, demand reduction typically has an indirect link to poverty reduction, while sustainable livelihoods have a direct link to poverty reduction. Projects are encouraged to steer away from assuming links, e.g. that demand reduction or law enforcement will result in increased numbers of wild animals, which support wildlife tourism; it is assumed this will translate into poverty reduction without explaining how the revenue will directly flow to communities affected by IWT.

The following points present examples of how projects could consider the context of their project in relation to poverty reduction:

- Does your project address poverty issues in an indirect way, for example development of institutional frameworks or improving governance at the national level in an eligible country? Will improved governance lead to more equitable benefit sharing?
- Policy change can be hard to affect during the timescale of an IWT Challenge Fund project. It might be more reasonable to demonstrate that the right people are being engaged. Evidence of engagement with the relevant high-level stakeholders throughout the course of a project will better demonstrate progress towards policy change than the dissemination of a policy brief at project end alone.
- Will Access and Benefit Sharing agreements, or other laws developed under your project, improve options for people living in poverty? Clearly articulating the broader, indirect impacts in your logframe may prove more complicated than direct benefits, with particular challenges around attribution. We recommend use of proxy indicators - for example "number of meetings held which involve all relevant stakeholders (e.g. communities and private sector buyers) to discuss Mutually Agreed Terms".
- Does your project involve training? Improved capacity and educational opportunities can increase the livelihood options available to individuals in eligible countries. Furthermore, adoption of the training of trainers approach will better ensure sustainability of the project, and limit chance of "brain drain", improving the poverty impact of your project.



Image Credit: Fauna & Flora International

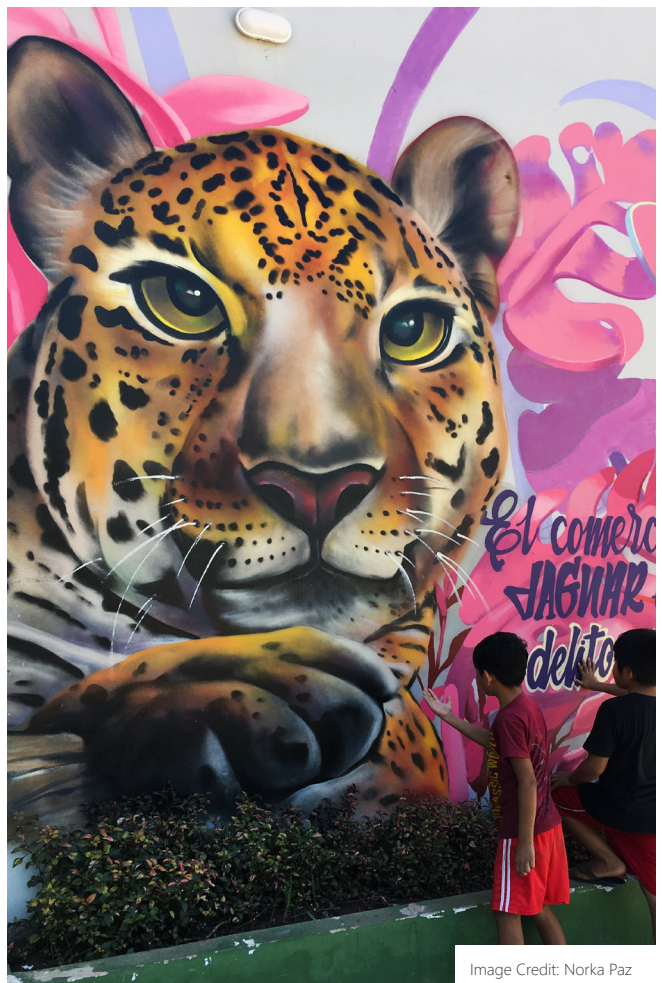


Image Credit: Norka Paz



- **Locally Led Approaches:**

- **Framing the Narrative:** All projects are encouraged to think of conservation as part of a wider social, political, economic and cultural context. It is crucial for projects to understand the historical contexts that have shaped communities and project areas rather than accepting definitions of certain communities as problematic, and in the case of IWT, as criminals. Projects should reference the historical and contemporary drivers of poverty and inequality in their area, and explain how the project interventions have been designed to address them or, at the minimum, avoid exacerbating them<sup>1</sup>.
- **Co-design with communities and/or stakeholders:** All projects are encouraged to develop and design projects with high levels of participation by and collaboration with local communities and/or relevant stakeholders. This should include engagement with local communities and locally based organisations to understand colonial legacies, historically determined and unjust power relations. People engaged in IWT, affected by IWT, or impacted by enforcement measures are experts by experience, and can provide essential insights about how best to tackle poverty and IWT in ways that are fair. All projects should use participatory methods, and work in close partnership with locally based organisations. A co-design approach would take this further by ensuring that the conceptualisation and design of the project is firmly led and owned by local communities and/or relevant stakeholders.



Image Credit: K. Paudel

- **Integrating GESI:** All projects are required to demonstrate gender sensitivity. This should include alignment with the principles of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), which acknowledges how gender intersects with other identities (disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status). This means more than just being attentive to the gender balance of team members and includes considerations on the “complex way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect and attempts to recognise the impact of these effects on the experiences of individuals and groups”<sup>2</sup>. This further demonstrates the importance of framing the narrative correctly, as doing so allows one to more meaningfully engage with GESI<sup>3</sup>.
- **Partnering with Development or Poverty Organisations:** In order to address poverty effectively it can be helpful to partner with organisations with relevant expertise in these areas. Projects are encouraged to work with organisations that specialise in development and/or poverty reduction to create more effective strategies.
- **Poverty reduction as central to the project:** All projects funded under the IWT Challenge Fund are required to contribute to poverty reduction; poverty reduction should therefore be central to the project design. All projects should steer away from treating poverty reduction as an ‘add on’ to a conservation project and rather, if possible in the context, strive to be transformative in the longer term by addressing wider structural issues like land rights and empowerment of marginalised communities.
- **Regularly review poverty reduction effects:** Projects should regularly review their poverty reduction impacts and integrate this within the wider monitoring, evaluation and learning of the project.

<sup>1</sup> For more direct guidance on how to design projects that can contribute to the decolonisation of conservation, please refer to Corbera, E., Maestre-Andrés, S., Collins, Y.A., Mabele, M.B. and Brockington, D., 2021. Decolonising biodiversity conservation. *Journal of Political Ecology* (Online). Available: <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/article/id/5969/download/pdf/>

<sup>2</sup> Please see IUCN Gender Analysis Guide, Spring 2021, available [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> Please see GESI Ambition Statement on the [IWT Challenge Fund website](#) for further information.



Image Credit: Cris Hagen



Image Credit: Ernst Udo Drawert

## Theme specific considerations and project examples:

### **Sustainable Livelihoods:**

To ensure the promotion of sustainable livelihoods is appropriate and will be sustainable after the project has ended, it is crucial for projects to consider the clear pathway to change and how interventions are likely to have impact.

Please see the evaluation carried out by the BCFs on using best practice from the economic development sector, specifically on adopting market-based approaches to enhancing people's livelihoods, available [here](#).

Questions to ask yourself when designing a Sustainable Livelihoods project:

- Who is the project working with? Is it working with people who are engaged in IWT? Is it working with communities affected by IWT?
- How will the project contribute to a change in practice?
- Will providing access to sustainable livelihood activities shift behaviour away from IWT activities or only provide supplementary income?

### **Project Example:**

The project team worked closely with local communities affected by IWT well in advance of submitting the proposal. It was clear that community members were drawn in to poaching to earn an income, but community members also felt intimidated by networks of traffickers linked to powerful and wealthy individuals in the capital city. The team encouraged people to identify their challenges and priorities for providing sustainable livelihoods. Different economic activities were supported for men and women, in recognition of how poverty and experience of IWT is differentiated by gender.

The team partnered with a national level development NGO to enhance their approach to development. Working closely with women in the community it became clear that they wanted to develop their skills and knowledge in ways that went beyond very localised agricultural projects. Instead, they aspired to access formal education. The team provided financial support in drafting applications, allowing two young women to train in environmental law at a local college. The team built in regular opportunities for reflection and review on what had and had not worked; and as a result, they were able to pivot from supporting poultry farming, which had limited impact, towards supporting education. This project is an example of thinking beyond very local and small-scale interventions, and instead supporting communities themselves affected by IWT in developing and pursuing ways to shape one's own life.



## Law Enforcement:

A focus on increased law enforcement has the potential to increase security and governance which may have positive impacts on poverty reduction. It is critical however to reflect on and mitigate the ways that their projects aim to reduce IWT might actually exacerbate poverty. Projects that focus on increasing capacity for law enforcement are well intended, but increased enforcement can have a negative impact on people and communities who engage in IWT to meet livelihood needs. As a result, all projects should identify how their projects might exacerbate multidimensional poverty or injustice and the steps they will take to mitigate that.

Questions to ask yourself when designing a Law Enforcement project:

- Who is currently benefiting from IWT and how might they negatively impacted by increased enforcement?
- What risks are there around appropriate and just prosecutions, and how will they be mitigated? Are there any risks that people may be treated unfairly through the justice system? You should consider the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion context you are working within.
- How can the project include a development/ poverty reduction mindset in addition to a law enforcement mindset in the design and implementation of the project?

### Project Example:

This project worked closely with local communities in advance of submission to understand what drew young men into the poaching economy in an area of intense and sustained armed conflict. It was clear that the drivers of their involvement included a colonial history of exclusion from the neighbouring protected area, and criminalisation of community use of animal and plant resources it contained. The community expressed a deep feeling of historical injustice that had been compounded by increased law enforcement, including the use of violent tactics by park rangers. The team also identified that young men in particular lacked alternative means of earning money, and were drawn into the poaching economy because they had few options.

The situation was made even more complex by on-going conflict between armed groups operating in the area, and young men would be recruited because of economic pressures. The team sought to understand and define the potentially negative impacts of increased law enforcement for these communities; these impacts included increased fear of public agencies (especially rangers and police), the potential for abuse of enforcement powers, including the use of violence by government officials, and loss of income from the trade. To address this, the project provided training to young men in ecological monitoring and local law enforcement; these jobs provided status and income in the community, and so they were more desirable to young men than poaching or joining armed groups. The team trialled Conservation Basic Income payments, and these worked well because they provided a secure income. The newly trained local wildlife guardians continued to work closely with their own communities to increase awareness of the laws related to wildlife conservation.

This project is an example of one that sought to have a direct impact on poverty reduction. This project was gender sensitive in that it understood the specific dynamics for young men, developed a clear understanding of local level historical grievances, empowered community members via paid roles and enhanced status, and addressed IWT in a way that was cognisant of the potential negative impacts of enforcement.



Image Credit: Martin Middlebrook



Image Credit: Stop Ivory





Image Credit: Matt Shirley



Image Credit: Tamar Edisherashvili



Image Credit: Araluen Schunmann

## Legal Frameworks:

Within the systems in which legal frameworks operate, power dynamics are particularly important. Community members with less agency or less voice may be the most susceptible to injustice or more impacted by changes to legal frameworks. It is therefore vital for projects to ensure they understand how changes to legal frameworks will impact stakeholders and local communities.

Questions to ask yourself when designing a Legal Frameworks project:

- How will the project consider the systems and context legal frameworks operate within?
- How can improvements in legal frameworks be considered as a means to ensure justice and wider definitions of poverty reduction such as empowerment and more choice over ways of life?
- Who are the winners and losers from any changes to legal frameworks?

## Project Example:

In this project the team worked with national level stakeholders well in advance of proposal submission; during that phase they identified that confusion around the legal status of trade in some plants led to a mixing of legally and illegally collected plants for international export. The team continued to work with the national botanic garden, the parks and wildlife service and the judiciary to clarify the legal status of different plants. The team worked in a participatory way with local communities in the areas where the plants were collected; via these interactions the project engaged in co-design of visual materials to assist plant collectors in identifying which plants could be legally collected and which could not. The team also worked with an international NGO, accustomed to developing fair trade certification standards, to certify legally procured plants and negotiate higher prices for those plants. This provided higher incomes to the plant collectors, and encouraged a move away from collecting and selling plants in ways that were not legal and not sustainable. This project addressed IWT via close work with local stakeholders to design relevant and durable solutions; the team engaged in co-design and recognised the structural global context in which plant collectors operated.



## Demand Reduction:

Reduced demand (across all species) can help tackle poverty if it means that communities are less pressured by poachers, traders and corrupt officials who move out of the trade because it is no longer profitable. This speaks to the wider definition of poverty reduction being linked to gaining more control and power over one's life choices. It is generally more challenging for projects focusing on demand reduction to evidence indirect poverty benefits i.e. assumptions that national revenues from tourism result in poverty reduction. Partnering with development organisations/ experts may help to bring in new perspectives.

Questions to ask yourself when designing a Demand Reduction project:

- How will a reduction in demand improve the welfare of the communities the project aims to work with?
- Do you have a clear understanding of consumer behaviour?
- Will your project be engaging in approaches related to market systems (such as tourism) to help drive a reduction in demand? The case study below sought to develop wildlife-based tourism. Questions to consider for such projects include:
  - How will the development or expansion of wildlife based tourism tackle poverty and IWT?
  - What are the precise dynamics of tourism in the local context the project seeks to work in? Do revenues and other benefits flow directly to communities affected by IWT, or not? In those communities, who benefits, and could those benefits be distributed more equitably in light of GESI and understandings of historical and contemporary drivers of inequality?

### Project Example:

Demand reduction projects can find it really challenging to demonstrate poverty reduction, especially where demand reduction activities take place in wealthier countries and communities that are the source of demand. In this example, the project ran an awareness campaign that informed consumers of the impact on elephant populations of demand for ivory. The campaign demonstrated a high degree of cultural awareness, and communicated the concerns in ways that were locally intelligible. This was possible because of the team engagement with local experts and organisations, including ivory carvers to understand continued demand.

At the same time the team partnered with a local development NGO in the elephant range state to work with communities where there were high levels of elephant poaching and of human-wildlife conflict. The project team also articulated the potential benefits of increased wildlife-based tourism as a result of growing elephant numbers once poaching was reduced. However, the team did not assume that increased tourism would automatically lead to reduced poverty; instead, they carefully set out how more tourism revenues and well paid/ high status employment in the industry would flow to the communities. The team also took a gendered approach, understanding that women aspired to management roles in the tourism industry, and so they supported their access to training rather than including women only as curio-makers for the tourist shops. This project was primarily designed to have an indirect impact on poverty reduction (via demand reduction campaigns aimed at wealthy consumers); but the team also recognised that there might be negative impacts on poorer communities engaged in the trade. Since the team did not have a track record of working in the source country, they developed a partnership with a local level development organisation to work with the tourism industry; this was to ensure that communities affected by poaching were in a stronger position to capture revenues and employment from tourism.



Image Credit: Fernando Garniel Machado