



# IWT Challenge Fund Newsletter

More Valuable than Gold

*Ixiamas Mural, Bolivia, Credit: Norka Paz*

**We recently launched a dedicated website for IWT Challenge Fund projects.**

**Visit [iwt.challengefund.org.uk](http://iwt.challengefund.org.uk) to find out about all of our projects, see past editions of the newsletter, and more!**

[iwt.challengefund.org.uk](http://iwt.challengefund.org.uk)

[gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wild-life-trade-iwt-challenge-fund](http://gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wild-life-trade-iwt-challenge-fund)

The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is a serious criminal industry worth up to £17 billion each year, threatening both wildlife and people. Funded by the UK Government, the IWT Challenge Fund tackles the illegal wildlife trade and, in doing so, contributes to sustainable development in developing countries. It funds projects which address one or more of the following themes:

- developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT
- strengthening law enforcement
- ensuring effective legal frameworks
- reducing demand for IWT products



**#endwildlifecrime**



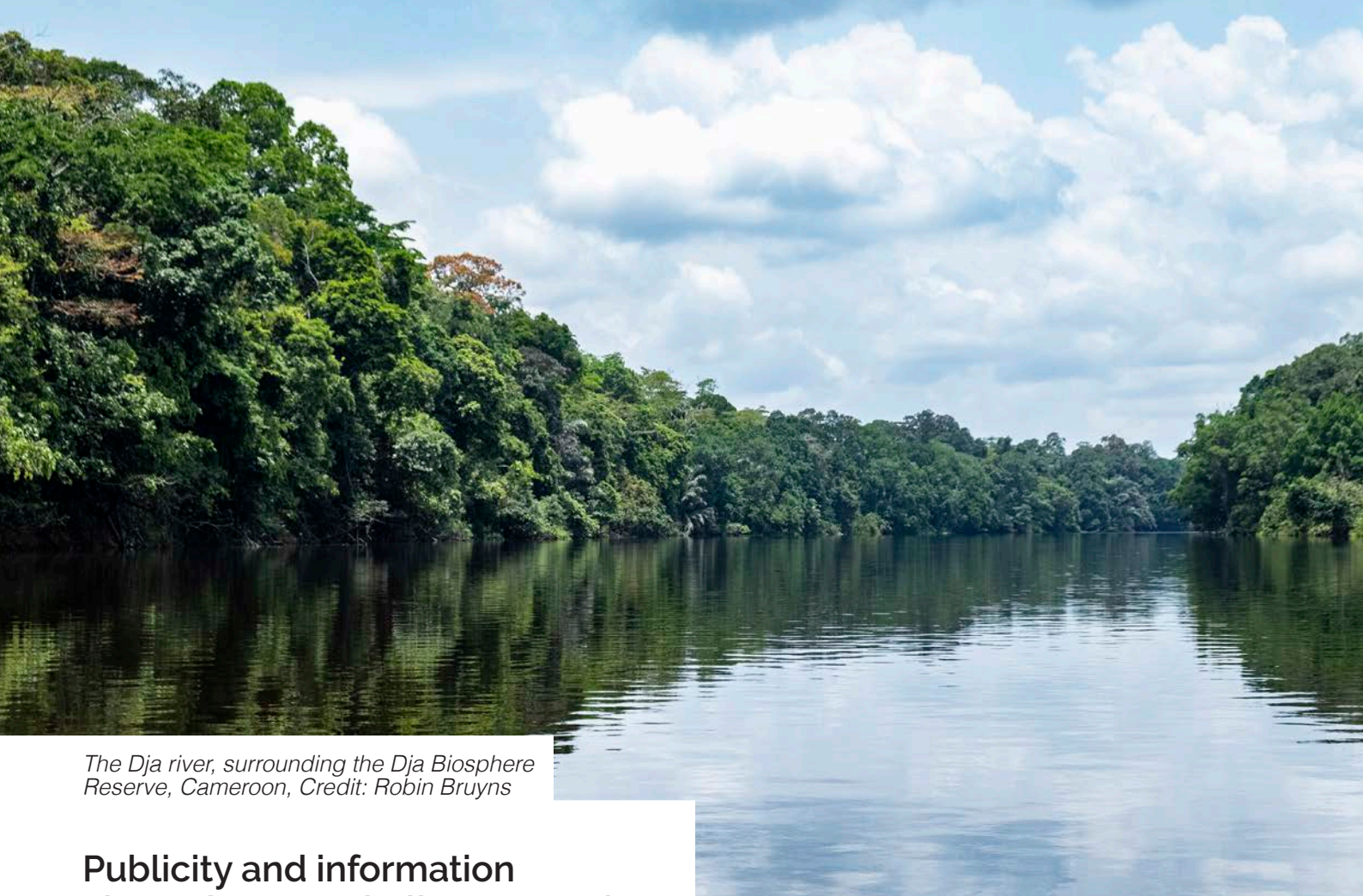


ZSL staff supporting surveillance camera deployment in Bardia, Credit: ZSL

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*The Dja river, surrounding the Dja Biosphere Reserve, Cameroon, Credit: Robin Bruyns*

## Publicity and information about the IWT Challenge Fund

For more information about the IWT Challenge fund, please visit

<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/> or

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund>

If you would like any further information about the IWT Challenge Fund, please email [IWT-Fund@itsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@itsi.co.uk)

If you would like to submit an article about your project for a future edition of the IWT Challenge Fund Newsletter, please email an article of no more than one side of A4, alongside any pictures, to [IWT-Newsletter@itsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Newsletter@itsi.co.uk)

### Publicity and referencing the IWT Challenge Fund

We kindly remind project leaders that if they are publicising their work then it is important that they make every effort to recognise UK Government support through the IWT Challenge Fund. This is important as it helps us to ensure the IWT Challenge Fund retains a high profile and to secure continued Government funding.





*Migrating elephants back safely to their habitat, Liberia Credit: FFI Liberia*

## Introduction

Our planet and its wildlife are under more pressure than ever. The **Dasgupta Review** highlighted that unprecedented habitat and biodiversity losses are being recorded, coupled with a rapid decline in the ecosystem services on which humans rely, with the review stating that the "current extinction rates, for example, are around 100 to 1,000 times higher than the baseline rate, and they are increasing". Despite the state of the planet, the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) continues.

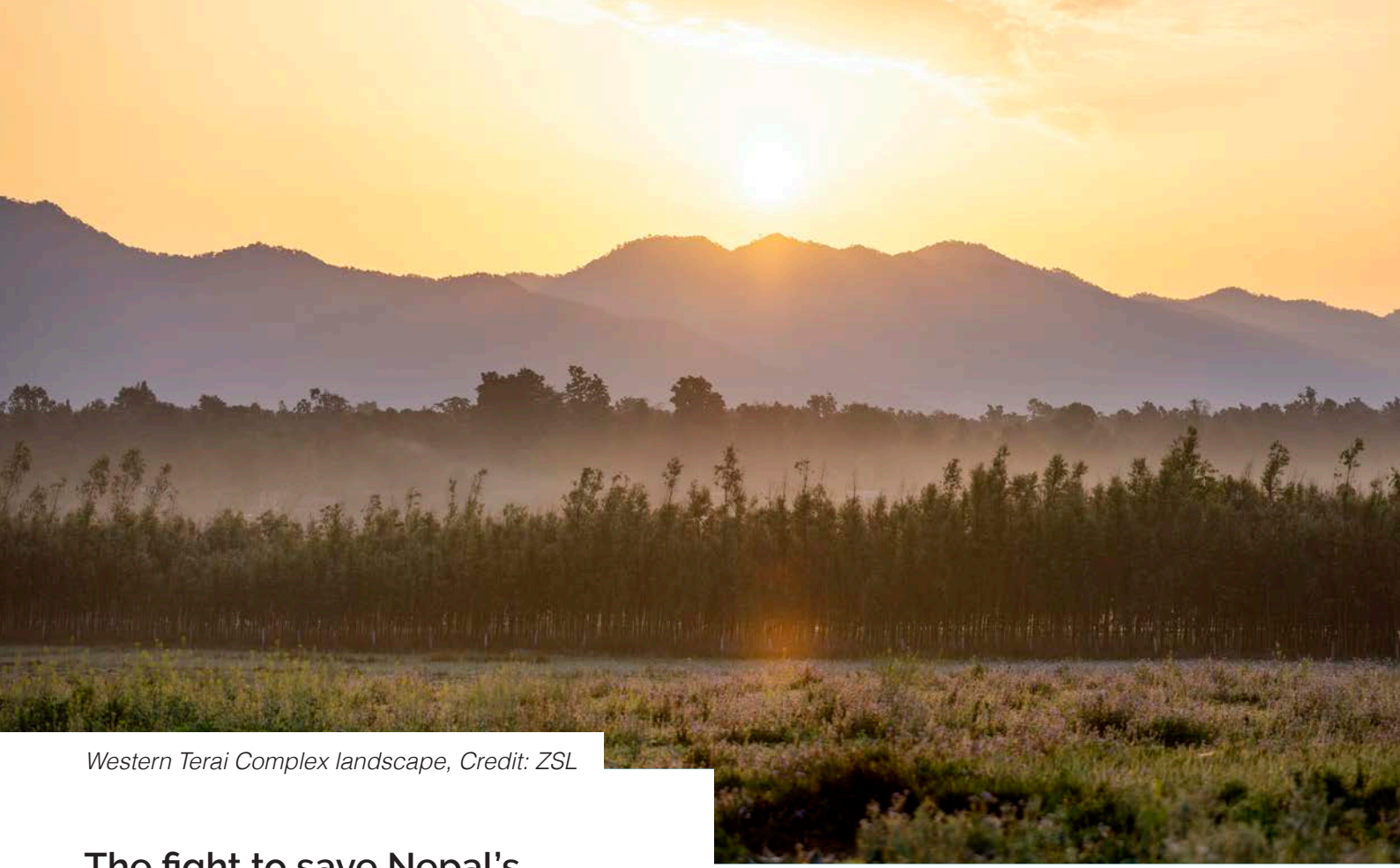
IWT is a serious criminal industry worth billions of pounds, with the price of rhino horn per gram famously being recorded to be worth more than its equivalent in gold.

Although this criminal activity pays, the costs to wildlife, biodiversity, local livelihoods and the planet are devastating.

In this edition of the *IWT Challenge Fund Newsletter*, we focus on the people, wildlife and ecosystems that are benefitting from our projects that are working hard to tackle the trade. These stories highlight that to the planet and many people, wildlife truly is more valuable than gold.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the *IWT Challenge Fund Newsletter!*





Western Terai Complex landscape, Credit: ZSL

## The fight to save Nepal's iconic species in the Western Terai Complex

Nepal is home to 118 ecosystems, all of which serve as refuge for many diverse flora and fauna, including several endangered species. People living on the fringes of the forests across Nepal have coexisted with these species for centuries and as a result their culture and traditions are deeply rooted in nature, including folklore, songs, festivals, and deities who are themselves personifications of nature. Despite the existence of such a rich tradition of coexistence between people and nature, the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) has become one of the most high-profile conservation challenges in Nepal, with the country unfortunately serving as both a transit area and a source point for wildlife-derived products.

Some of the most globally threatened species are amongst the topmost illegally traded fauna in Nepal, including pangolins, red pandas, tigers, rhinoceros, leopards, and elephants. Records from Nepal Police show that between 2010 and 2017, 2,673 kg of pangolin scales and eight live pangolins were confiscated across the country. Similarly, 74 cases of trafficked red panda hides were reported in Nepal from 2008 to 2016, and in 2015 alone 15 tiger skins and 121 tiger bones were confiscated.

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especially those community members who are vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. Wildlife criminal syndicates from outside the local area, operating illegally and unsustainably, strip these communities of resources. At the same time, they frequently exploit community members, hiring them and making use of their specialised local knowledge to track, kill and supply the desired species. It is the syndicates that primarily profit from IWT, while local people are frequently left to bear most of the brunt from law enforcement agencies. This leads to unfair criminalisation, serving to sour the relationship between law enforcement agencies and local people. In some cases, this can make communities harbour ill-will towards conservation – an impact that can deepen with rising rates of human-wildlife conflict, particularly if local communities do not see tangible benefits from conservation activities.



Project supported homestay of Banke Buffer Zone, Credit: ZSL

Just as importantly, IWT is actually causing the deterioration of ecosystem services that are vital to securing local people's long-term livelihoods, by removing unsustainable amounts of vital species.

Different species interact with each other in an ecosystem to keep it functional and support different services, including provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting services. As species are lost, the intricate web of networks within the ecosystem becomes increasingly disturbed, hampering the system's ability to sustain the services. IWT, therefore, has a dual negative impact on communities, both in the short and long term, by essentially threatening their way of life. As a result, the fight against IWT has become a huge battle to secure long-term sustainable livelihoods for local people through a healthy and flourishing ecosystem, in the face of short-term incentives to earn fast cash at the cost of wildlife.

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It is for this reason that ZSL's *Strengthening Community Anti-poaching and Ecotourism in the Western Terai Complex* project was envisioned and subsequently implemented in the Western Terai Complex (WTC) of Nepal from 2017, after we received funding from the UK Government, through the IWT Challenge Fund. The WTC is home to three important protected areas (PAs) – Banke, Bardia and Shuklaphanta National Parks. It is one of the most ecologically rich landscapes in Nepal as well as one of the most IWT-prone regions.

During the implementation of the project, ZSL Nepal worked with the PA staff, law enforcement agencies, conservation partners Himalayan Nature and National Trust for Nature Conservation, and the local communities. We helped the PA reform Rapid Response Teams, strengthened surveillance by helping to deploy 30 GSM-enabled surveillance cameras (which recorded >12,000 alert images, ~21% of them of intruders) and conducted regular long- and short-range patrols. These activities were complemented through the creation of 16 community-based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs), strengthening their networks, improving their capacity and enhancing intelligence-sharing mechanisms among LE agencies to curb wildlife trafficking through the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). The WCCB is a networking and coordinating mechanism set up by the Government of Nepal.



As a result of these interventions, 291 people (involved in poaching, timber smuggling, and game hunting) were arrested, and more than 39 wildlife trophies were seized from the WTC during the project period. Several weapons, including muskets, bullets and gunpowder, along with snares, were also seized, and poaching nests within PA boundaries were destroyed. Similarly, CBAPUs helped the park rescue animals such as pythons, mugger crocodiles, spotted deer and tortoise, while also playing a crucial role in maintaining vigilance within their respective buffer zone community forests through a combined 653 patrols during the project period. This shows an exemplary drive on local people's part to combat IWT.

In addition, to help communities receive tangible benefits from conservation, we supported three homestay clusters, helping build 18 homestays that are providing services to the visitors. Our interventions, helping local people build their knowledge and skill sets (including around improved vegetable and livestock farming, greater market linkages through advertisement, trainings, technical advice, and financial resources) have helped 139 households within the WTC to tap into sustainable livelihood options. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, local communities have still expressed their trust in eco-tourism. Before the lockdown, the records of homestays showed they earned NPR 150,000 (£918) in a period of six months from September 2019 to March 2020.

Mr. Krishna Chaudhary, chairperson of Gabhar-Chyamma homestay cluster and secretary of Homestay Association

of Nepal, said, "We had witnessed a rise in tourist numbers in the past five years in WTC as species such as the tiger grew from 71 (2013) to 124 individuals (2018), and several other species also grew in number. We anticipate that once this pandemic is over, tourism will still flourish in our region, and we can earn our livelihood through these homestays. Until then, we will continue to spread the message of conservation in our communities and help our communities work with PA authorities to safeguard wildlife against illegal activities."

This project has supported the creation of sustainable means of income for communities, working with park staff to conserve some of Nepal's iconic species including the Royal Bengal tiger, greater one-horned rhinoceros, Asian elephant, and pangolin.

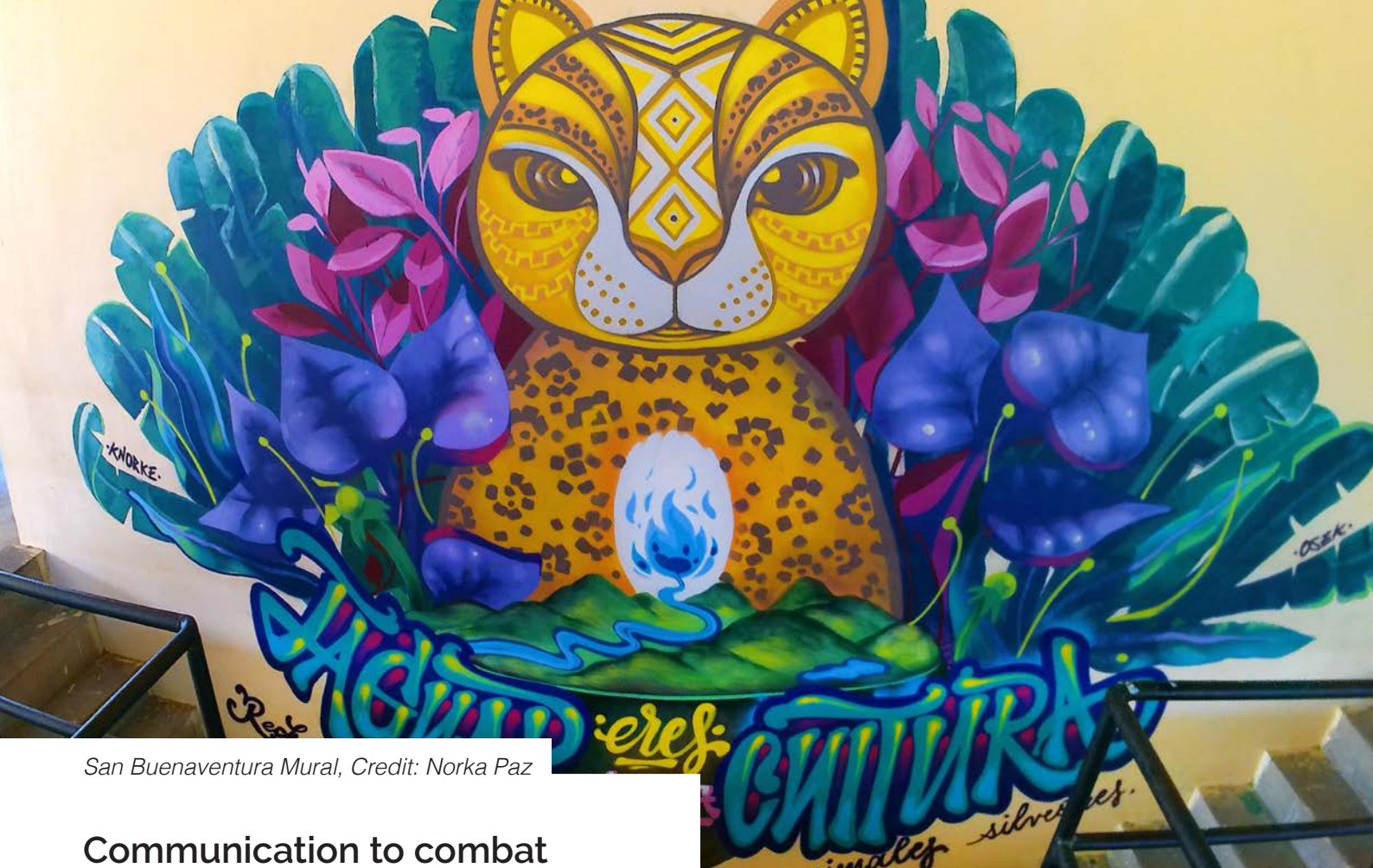
As the impacts from climate change increasingly threaten the livelihoods of vulnerable communities, it is imperative that we come together to minimise illegal wildlife trade activities and the degradation of ecosystems. Only then can we ensure the resilience of the ecosystem services that are essential to fighting the impacts of not only climate change but future pandemics and secure the wellbeing of both the people and the wildlife we share this planet with.

Written by Pawan Gautam. This article features project **IWT041** "Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trafficking through a Community-based Conservation Approach", led by ZSL, working in Nepal.



Project supported homestay of Shuklaphanta Buffer Zone, Credit: ZSL





San Buenaventura Mural, Credit: Norka Paz

## Communication to combat wildlife trafficking in the Greater Madidi Landscape, Bolivia

Communication is fundamental in the fight against wildlife trafficking. In Bolivia, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) launched a strategic, multi-media campaign to raise awareness about the threats posed to jaguars (*Panthera onca*) and other fauna by wildlife trafficking. Awareness-raising through various media (radio, television, social media and posters), transcended into action with the painting of murals in the Rurrenabaque, Ixiamas, San Buenaventura and Tumupasa municipalities in north-western Bolivia – a regionally important jaguar stronghold. This action, as a result of effective communication, multiplied impact and amplified the voice of local communities, public institutions, indigenous authorities, local media and civil society.

“ We consider young people to be "culture creators", and sought to encourage their interest in biodiversity conservation and offer them the opportunity to participate in advocacy actions

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Through our project we sought to emotionally and effectively engage audiences, generating social learning processes, initially emphasising that protected areas and indigenous territories are critical for jaguars, wildlife and biodiversity. This emphasis then shifted to introduce the audience to the threat of wildlife trafficking, with the iconic jaguar as the focal point.

We consider young people to be "culture creators", and sought to encourage their interest in biodiversity conservation and offer them the opportunity to participate in advocacy actions. This was achieved by linking art as a way of inspiring an attractive culture around social movements and by painting spectacular murals with high-impact messages, such as "the jaguar is life, not merchandise", "jaguar is our culture" and "protect the jaguar and it will protect our forest".

This local and participatory intervention was enriched by the young people who contributed with proposals and messages about how the species would be represented through art and the texts that would accompany them, promoting an empowerment process and a deeper connection with the population. "Through the murals we have sent messages to the new generations and, while we were painting them, we discussed these issues with the elderly," said artist Norka Paz.



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We are committed to conserve and protect our home, our diversity. We coexist with nature, caring for and protecting Mother Earth - we are the guardians of the Amazon

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- Sergio Quenevo,  
President of the Tacana People's  
Indigenous Council

Visual communication highlights the value of street art as a way of communicating directly with people and showing the presence of youth in issues of general interest. "The children asked many questions about the paintings, the technique, the animals chosen, and many of them even started to draw the animals next to us" Norka added.

Local participants committed to share it with their family and friends, peers, colleagues and others. Municipal governments and local media also gave the murals wide coverage. "The painting of murals at different sites surprised us because of the impact it has caused. The local population and visitors have been taking pictures of the paintings and sharing the messages through different traditional and social media. The paintings helped the population visualise the message, understand and share it," said Luis Alberto Alípaz Ascui, Mayor of San Buenaventura.

"We made a statement as Tacana Indigenous People to protect wildlife. We have carried out communication activities through television and radio interviews, campaigns on social media and have painted murals in strategic places so that people are aware and together we can say no to the illegal trade of wildlife. We are committed to conserve and protect our home, our diversity. We coexist with nature, caring for and protecting Mother Earth. We are the guardians of the Amazon," said Sergio Quenevo, President of the Tacana People's Indigenous Council (CIPTA). To strengthen this local response against wildlife trafficking, WCS plans to work in schools, women's organisations and other interest groups, facilitating collaboration between organisations. Online training sessions are also planned for local communicators to develop campaigns that inform, mobilise and support behavioural change against wildlife trafficking.

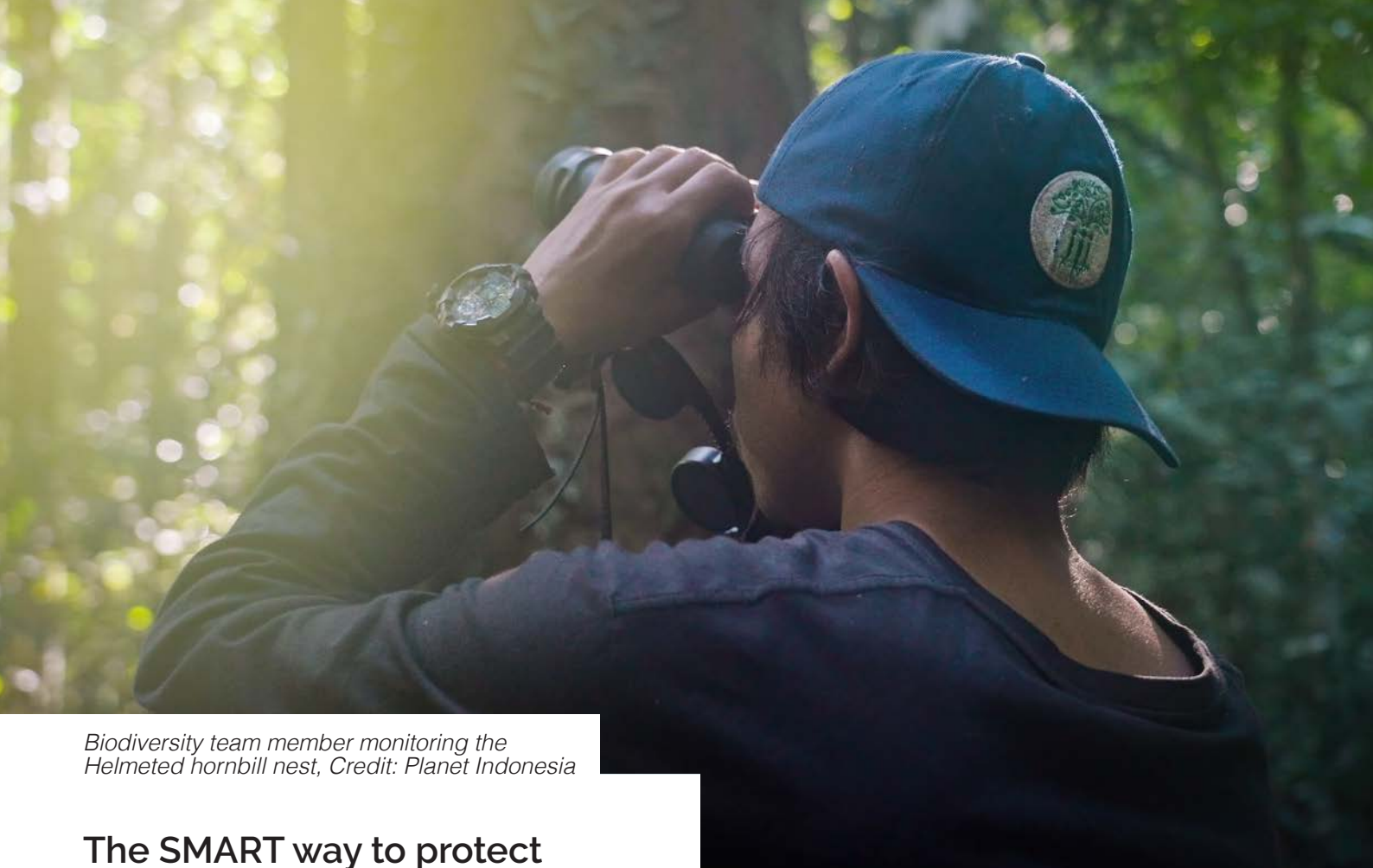
Positive action was possible thanks to the predisposition of the population to participate in these processes against wildlife trafficking in their territories. It is hoped that this local effort will gradually grow reaching thousands of people and becoming a national movement for change!

Written by Carina Osio. This article features project **IWT068** "A price on their heads: Addressing jaguar trafficking in Bolivia", led by WCS, working in Bolivia.



Tumupasa Mural, Credit: Norka Paz





*Biodiversity team member monitoring the Helmeted hornbill nest, Credit: Planet Indonesia*

## The SMART way to protect Helmeted hornbill populations in Borneo

On a late June afternoon, members of a patrol unit and a biodiversity team perch below a tree in a protected forested region in Borneo waiting to glimpse a distinct bird species with large black and white tailfeathers and a solid casque on its bill. They are waiting to see their remarkable Helmeted hornbill return. Having stored vast amounts of nuts and fruits in its neck pouch it swoops to deliver food to its mate sealed inside the tree cavity caring for her young.

Over the past decade, the Helmeted hornbill has seen a steep decline in its population, and in 2015 a reassessment of the species saw it move from the IUCN's Near Threatened to Critically Endangered list. Hunted for its solid red and yellow casque, which is prized for use as ornamental carvings, primarily in China, it is one of the most threatened bird species on the planet. This illegal trade is driving this most unique hornbill species to extinction. At Yayasan Planet Indonesia (YPI), we partner with some of the most remote villages in West Kalimantan to protect at risk ecosystems and the wildlife that inhabits them.

In the previous [IWT Challenge Fund Newsletter](#), we introduced you to YPI's holistic approach through our Conservation Cooperative model in the article "Reducing illegal wildlife trafficking through a holistic community-led conservation approach".

Our model aims to alleviate the socio-economic inequalities that are often the root cause of why rural communities are left vulnerable to exploitation by wildlife traders and become engaged in the country's one billion dollar illegal wildlife trade industry. In this article we are going to dive into a few aspects of our model that directly contribute to the Helmeted hornbill 10-year Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, designed to ensure that the Helmeted hornbill is protected from poaching, trafficking and habitat loss and thrives in its natural environment. As part of our wider approach we work with the rural communities in these ecosystems to establish community-led deterrents to IWT by involving community members to monitor and enforce both national and village level rules related to forests and their wildlife.

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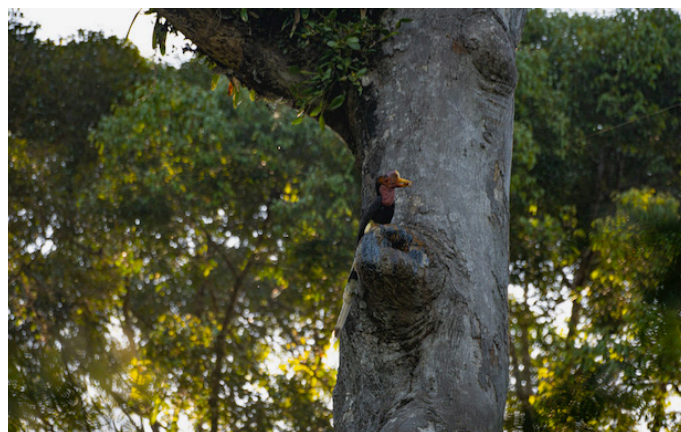
We have supported 20 community members in six patrol teams from six villages to conduct forest patrols in one of the areas we work in. These community-led patrols use spatial, monitoring and reporting (SMART) methodology and consist of one government park ranger, three to four villagers, and one YPI field staff member.

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**In 2017, YPI conducted a year-long survey in collaboration with the SMART patrol units in Borneo and found it to be a haven for the Helmeted hornbill who previously were not known to call this area home**

During monthly patrols, SMART patrol members are at the frontline of anti-poaching efforts, detecting and disarming snares, recording encounters of illegal activity and documenting wildlife present across 55,800ha of forests inside the protected reserve. In 2017, YPI conducted a year-long survey in collaboration with the SMART patrol units in Borneo and found it to be a haven for the Helmeted hornbill who previously were not known to call this area home. The discovery prompted rapid surveying to try and estimate the number of individuals present in the area.

Although it is notoriously difficult to estimate the number of these extremely sensitive birds, YPI has employed wildlife surveying techniques in the form of Pooling Local Expert Opinion (PLEO) and Transects, that has allowed us to track changes in the hornbill population and other endangered species over the last three years. When we first ran the transect survey, the team were elated to find so many Helmeted hornbills and other hornbill species in this landscape – it’s a hornbill paradise! We are pleased to say that even across these initial years of surveying we have seen a slight increase in Helmeted hornbill population density and our biodiversity team are thrilled to have new chicks born in the area. This surveying work will continue annually to compare densities for all the species are monitoring throughout our project’s lifetime.

Additionally, at the end of each month, reports are produced from our SMART patrol data collected in the forest.



*Helmeted hornbill, Credit: Planet Indonesia*

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Over the years of operation, the data has shown statistically significant reduction in the incidence of poaching, hunting, encroachment and logging activity around the patrolled locations. This encouraging data is provided to village leaders, cooperative leaders and government officials to build transparency among stakeholders and decide conservation action collectively. In this way, the SMART patrol programme provides the basis for local communities to engage in wide-reaching anti-poaching efforts to protect local forests and wildlife while simultaneously collaborating with government park rangers.

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Our SMART patrol and research works in collaboration with our wider holistic Conservation Cooperative model, which acts as the main platform where we can help Indigenous Communities restore sustainable relationships with their environment – so that they can, once again, regain management of their natural resources, forests and wildlife in a way that can benefit them for generations to come.

Written by Josephine Crouch. This article features project **IWT077** “Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trafficking through a Community-based Conservation Approach”, led by Planet Indonesia, working in Indonesia.





Henhouse with examples of improved village chickens, Credit: ZSL

## Reducing the illegal trade by empowering women to invest in alternative protein sources: the production of 'improved village chickens'

The Dja Biosphere Reserve (DBR), located in the south of Cameroon, is recognised worldwide for its important biodiversity. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, DBR is also an IUCN priority site for the conservation of endangered species such as the African forest elephant, the western lowland gorilla, several species of pangolin, the African grey parrot, and the central chimpanzee.

The biodiversity of the DBR is threatened by several activities, mainly the poaching of protected species for consumption as bush meat, and for products, primarily ivory and pangolin scales, as part of the illegal wildlife trade. This situation is exacerbated by weak application of the wildlife laws.

Communities living near the river at the edge of DBR are on the frontline of the conservation of forest resources, on which they depend for many of their daily activities including subsistence agriculture, local hunting, fishing and traditional medicine. These resources are increasingly threatened by the perpetrators of illegal activities including commercial bush meat hunting to supply urban centres. Due to their close proximity to the forest environment, these communities are in a prime position to witness and pass on information regarding infractions by intruders.

“ The biodiversity of the DBR is threatened by several activities, mainly the poaching of protected species for consumption as bush meat, and for products, primarily ivory and pangolin scales, as part of the illegal wildlife trade ”

During many of these activities, members of these communities are used as trackers and porters, often through coercion and are poorly recompensed.

An approach to the conservation of natural resources that considers the participation of these communities is therefore a major asset and promoter of sustainability around DBR for the simple reason that, as the primary beneficiaries, these communities position themselves as legitimate defenders of natural resources.

Women are more protective, and they think more about tomorrow and future generations. Women are the centre of household activity and decision-making.

“ Women are more protective, and they think more about tomorrow and future generations ”





*Mrs Sem from Adjap community explaining the incubator process, Credit: Robin Bruyns*

Developing a strategy for creating alternative incomes to illegal activities linked to wildlife therefore requires more women to be empowered and sensitised. To achieve this objective, Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) groups were formed in participating communities, with membership of at least 50% women.

The creation of VSLAs, collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs such as bush mango) and other income generating activities (IGAs) are aimed at developing sustainable livelihoods within local communities affected by IWT, and to provide them with an alternative source of revenue apart from poaching. The platforms previously established by participation in VSLAs and IGAs, are strengthened through radio broadcasts and the establishment of listening groups.

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Working sessions with the communities revealed that “animal husbandry”, in the form of poultry rearing, is an activity in great demand. However, several previous projects had addressed this need with relatively little success. The answer to the question as to why this activity had never succeeded was the difficulty of acquiring “one-day-old chicks”, given the isolation of communities.

The choice of breed for an “improved village chicken” was made with the following factors in mind:

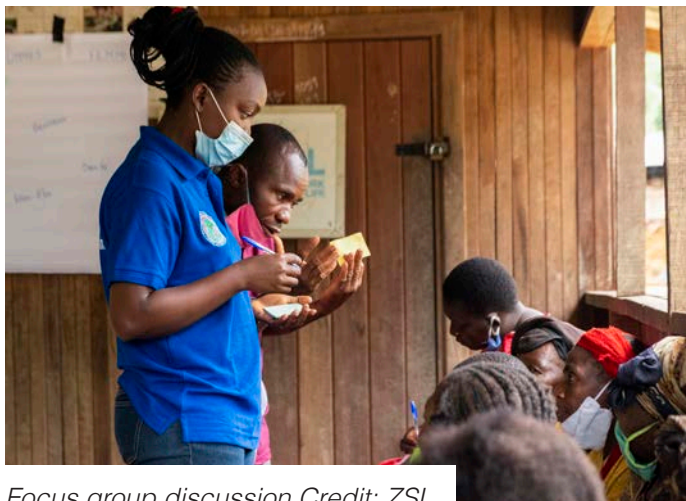
- high laying capacity
- disease resistance
- high capacity for physical development (males weighing up to 10 kg) and
- it does not require special monitoring and therefore can be reared like a traditional village chicken.

VSLA members received appropriate training including the construction of suitable henhouses and the management of the birds covering feeding, watering and medication. Following this, sixty, two-month-old chicks were delivered to eight communities including both Bantu and Baka villages, in the southern and eastern peripheral zone of the DBR.

As the results of the poultry rearing activity were monitored, the communities received ongoing training with the goal of complete ownership of the activity by the participating communities. Local production of chicken

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Focus group discussion Credit: ZSL

feed was an essential component, and its manufacture, using locally produced ingredients such as eggshells, meat bones, locally produced corn and soybeans, and smoked fish waste, has now been achieved.

With local manufacture of the feed, the cost of producing chicks is substantially reduced and the profitability of poultry rearing is increased. In addition to providing additional income to participating households, this activity also contributes an important alternative protein intake to bushmeat.

Today these communities feel proud to have participated. Some have already been solicited by other communities to supply chicks and have started selling both chickens and chicks. The additional income is an important contribution to family income, reducing the need to rely on illegal activities related to wildlife. The production of day-old chicks is an innovation for local people who are taking a decisive step in the problem of day-old chick supply.

“**The production of day-old chicks is an innovation for local people who are taking a decisive step in the problem of day-old chick supply**”

Another important activity selected by women was kitchen garden vegetable production. This includes the production of carrots, chilli, leeks, basil and a local species of vegetable named “zome”.

“Thanks to the project, my home was able to maintain feeding themselves, particularly last year when Covid-19 forced everyone to stay at home. With my production of vegetables, and the availability of chickens, it was easier to manage all the kids and the whole family continuously at home.”

“**Thanks to the project, my home was able to maintain feeding themselves, particularly last year when Covid-19 forced everyone to stay at home. With my production of vegetables, and the availability of chickens, it was easier to manage all the kids and the whole family continuously at home**”

“Since we are involved in IGA, it takes time to establish our farms, and reduces our availability to take part in poaching activities and jobs initiated by Bantu communities. We are now self-producers of many of our goods.”

Over the past six years, ZSL has initiated the broadcast of a radio programme that contributes to raising awareness of IWT related issues by communicating on all topics related to wildlife and the wildlife law. These broadcasts offer a framework where communities can listen and ask questions concerning practical issues they encounter daily, denounce abuse and illegal activities, and share their experiences. The resource person for these radio shows is from the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF). To achieve a greater involvement of women, ZSL organised a road show including a round table session during activities related to “International Women’s Day”. The topic was: “Women and wildlife conservation: how can they participate to the conservation of biodiversity?”

This increased awareness of illegal wildlife trafficking, coupled with the introduction of a profitable IGA into the communities, has assisted in the development of an intelligence network. This anonymous system has led to notable successes, particularly concerning African grey parrots, resulting in the seizure of about twenty live parrots trapped inside the DBR. Based on information received from community members, these birds were seized and successfully transported to the Limbe Wildlife Centre for rehabilitation and eventual release back into the wild.

Written by Fanny Djomkam. This article features project **IWT062** “Disrupting the illegal wildlife trade in grey parrots in Cameroon”, led by ZSL, working in Cameroon.





Billboard deployment at Ganta Border with Guinea, Credit: FFI Liberia

## A strategic coalition of NGOs and Government bodies tackling wildlife crimes in Liberia and its transboundary countries

Throughout Liberia's natural forests and other protected areas, wildlife species are undergoing severe decline due to habitat loss, habitat degradation and unsustainable levels of exploitation for pet trade, bushmeat and animal products. These include threatened and endemic species like the critically endangered western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*); critically endangered African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*); vulnerable white bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*), black-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*), and giant pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*); endangered pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*); and endangered Timneh parrot (*Psittacus timneh*).

“ Throughout Liberia's natural forests and other protected areas, wildlife species are undergoing severe decline due to habitat loss, habitat degradation and unsustainable levels of exploitation for pet trade, bushmeat and animal products

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With the support of the IWT Challenge Fund, and in partnership with government institution, the Forest Development Authority (FDA), Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is working on setting up different strategies to safeguard the wildlife of Liberia. One of the strategies is the formation of a national committee called the Law Enforcement Sub Committee (LESC) under the umbrella of the Species Working Group of Liberia. This subcommittee comprises national and international conservation NGOs, joint security, Ministry of Justice, Liberia National Police, and other partners. The members of LESC meet regularly to share updates, lessons learned, and set strategies to ensure effective coordination of law enforcement actions to combat wildlife crimes in Liberia.

A key achievement to date is the establishment of the Wildlife Crime Task Force (WCTF), with an overarching objective to monitor the status of wildlife across Liberia, led by the FDA. An Emergency Elephant Committee, a transboundary collaboration with Guinea, was set up in September 2020 with a specific mission to monitor the movement of two elephants moving between Liberia and Guinea. Awareness campaigns were organised to sensitise local communities on elephants and ensure safety for both elephants and people.

FFI works closely with FDA, and other conservation partners, to coordinate, plan and implement conservation interventions, including law enforcement strategies. These NGOs include Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and



Joint security training on combatting wildlife crime in Liberia and transboundary landscapes, Credit: FFI Liberia

Protection, Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, and Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia, with all of them working under the guidance of FDA.

With IWT Challenge Fund support, FFI has been able to expand its focus and activities to include not just the forest landscapes inside Liberia, but also its transboundary landscapes. In March 2020, 15 rangers working for Ziama Biosphere Reserve in Guinea were provided training on skills to address IWT crimes, focusing on SMART and Cyber Tracker tools. Complementing the Emergency Elephant Committee, this transboundary model was extended to countries neighbouring Liberia, through the respective government wildlife authorities, such as Centre Forestier de N'Zérékoré in Guinea, and Ministère des Eaux et Forêts in Cote d'Ivoire, with communication channels established to serve as a platform to inform different partners about the movement of elephants.

From establishing transboundary collaboration to tackle wildlife crimes, to building the capacity of FDA

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staff working for wildlife habitat protection and law enforcement stakeholders, and supporting awareness and outreach campaigns on wildlife safety for different communities, the IWT Challenge Fund has been instrumental in implementing these strategies, boosting the protection of the forests and charismatic species of Liberia and its transboundary countries.

Written by Dr Mary Molokwu Odozi and Innocent Ndikubwimana. This article features project **IWT065** “Strengthening Liberia’s response to illegal wildlife trade”, led by FFI, working in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.





Group photo of eight Chinese tourism companies signing Conventions Credit: TRAFFIC

## Engaging public and private sectors of China and Laos for combatting illegal wildlife trade

As Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), China and Laos are responsible for ensuring the illegal trade and consumption of wild animals and plants is effectively controlled to protect wild resources. However, the smuggling of wildlife at the border between China and Laos is a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies in both countries, as is the involvement of Chinese nationals in illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in Laos.

To effectively combat this, Customs officials in both countries met in a ground-breaking virtual forum in December 2020, to discuss the future measures both countries can take to address wildlife trafficking across their borders. During the meeting which was co-hosted with alongside TRAFFIC's China office and WWF Laos, officials discussed intelligence sharing, transboundary law enforcement, the latest trafficking situation and wildlife crime investigation methods, as well as training plans and the need for greater public education.

This meeting signalled the increased commitment from both countries to tackle IWT. A further virtual forum was held in April 2021 with Customs officials from other Southeast Asian countries in attendance, to promote law enforcement exchanges between China and Southeast Asian countries.

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese tourists were the largest outbound travellers globally. There are many publicly reported cases of Chinese tourists being caught illegally carrying wildlife and wildlife products from holiday or business in countries which may have inadequate laws and challenges with law enforcement. Despite stringent restrictions during the pandemic, such cases were still apparent. In an effort to address this issue, the Chinese tourism industry has focused their efforts on educating customers not to purchase illegal wildlife products while travelling.

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In a further show of commitment, global leaders from China's tourism industry pledged to tackle IWT by signing the Tourism Industry's Illegal Wildlife Trade Convention. This was created by the World Tourism Federation (WTA) and China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA), at a dedicated event hosted by TRAFFIC's China office.

# 旅游行业抵制野生动植物非法贸易自律公约 签署仪式

SIGNING CEREMONY OF TOURISM INDUSTRY VOLUNTARY CODE OF PRACTICE TO REFUSE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE AND PRODUCTS  
2021年3月23日 中国北京 23 MARCH BEIJING CHINA



仲一鸣

刘冬

王磊

王春峰

李正

李正

李正

胡婷婷



The signing board for the tourism event, Credit: TRAFFIC

Commitment to this Convention means signatories will train staff to detect and report any illegal wildlife trade or any suspicious activity to law enforcement. The Convention also encourages tourism operators to offer increasing ecotourism experiences and promote ethical travel to customers, while engaging them on the issue of wildlife protection and encouraging them to refuse illegally sourced wildlife products on holiday.

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To better change Chinese outbound travellers’ wildlife consumption behaviour, TRAFFIC and its partners are exploring science-based behaviour change approaches

To better change Chinese outbound travellers’ wildlife consumption behaviour, TRAFFIC and its partners are exploring science-based behaviour change approaches. Funded by other donors, a Social Behaviour Change toolkit for Chinese audiences is now available at [www.trafficchina.org/sbc](http://www.trafficchina.org/sbc). This toolkit will be widely used for the training of tourism industry staff and their customers in the future.

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Through this project, TRAFFIC and WWF aim to strengthen the trans-boundary wildlife law enforcement collaboration between China and Laos, significantly reduce demand for illegal wildlife products among Chinese nationals in Laos, and help promote sustainable trade development

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Through this project, TRAFFIC and WWF aim to strengthen the trans-boundary wildlife law enforcement collaboration between China and Laos, significantly reduce demand for illegal wildlife products among Chinese nationals in Laos, and help promote sustainable trade development.

Written by Jing Chen. This article features project **IWT071** “Reducing demand for wildlife products among Chinese nationals in Laos”, led by TRAFFIC, working in China and Laos.





*Chili production at Biba 2 village, Cameroon, Credit: Fanny Djomkam*

## Newsletter contacts

For any queries on project applications or existing projects please contact our IWT Administrators (NIRAS-LTS International) at [IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk)

This newsletter is produced on a biannual basis. To include an article on your project in an upcoming edition, on the theme of "The Enforcement Effort" please contact us at [IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk)

The UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund provides financial support to practical projects around the world which are:

- developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT
- strengthening law enforcement
- ensuring effective legal frameworks
- reducing demand for IWT products

The IWT Challenge Fund has committed over £27m to 92 projects around the world since it was launched at the London IWT Conference in 2014.