

Newsletter

October 2019



Angolan elephant, Credit: Tamar Ron

The UK government is committed to ending the illegal wildlife trade, and has committed £30m over three years to help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world's most iconic species from the threat of extinction.

Find out more [here](#) or follow [#endwildlifecrime](#) on social media for the latest news and information.

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


Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



#endwildlifecrime

**[gov.uk/government/collections/
illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund](https://gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund)**

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TRAFFIC China visit Baidu,
Credit: TRAFFIC

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Leading courier companies sign code of practice against IWT deliveries, Credit: TRAFFIC

Publicity and information about the IWT Challenge Fund

For more information about the IWT Challenge fund, please visit gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund

If you would like any further information about the IWT Challenge Fund, please email the team at IWT-Fund@itsi.co.uk

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

Publicity and referencing 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.



Basic law enforcement training conducted in Bomassa, Credit: WCS

Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund Newsletter!

The launch of this newsletter coincides with one year since the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference was held in London. Global leaders were brought together in an effort to eradicate IWT and to better protect vulnerable species from the threat of extinction.

To date, the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund has dedicated over £20 million to support 75 projects across the globe who are working to tackle the trade of wildlife products, promote sustainable livelihoods and improve law enforcement and legal frameworks. IWT not only threatens the most endangered species, but also undermines good governance, promotes corruption and criminal networks, and severely impacts vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Exactly one year on from the Illegal Wildlife Conference held in London, we are stepping up our efforts to protect international biodiversity and end wildlife crime around the globe. On 12 October International Environment Minister Zac Goldsmith announced a commitment for funding to tackle the Illegal Wildlife Trade, including through the IWT Challenge Fund, of £30 million over three years. We are thrilled to confirm this extra funding which will help continue our efforts to end wildlife crime worldwide! The official press release can be found [here](#).

Through this edition of the newsletter we wanted to outline the importance of stakeholder involvement, and how supporting governments and empowering communities can result in success not only for the project but also for local people. The projects featured in this newsletter share stories of success resulting from effective partnerships and greater local involvement.



January workshop attended by the Minister of Environment, Credit: EPI

Developing investigation and prosecution capacity to save Angola's elephants

Angola's recent history, for people and wildlife, is tragic. But the Angolan government, with assistance from Defra, is now working to end the illegal wildlife trade and protect its remaining elephants.

Angola is a vast country, sparsely populated and rich in biodiversity. The wildlife and people of Angola have suffered through four decades of war which came to an end in 2002. Angola was once home to an estimated 70,000 elephants in the mid-1970s, however the story of Angola's elephants today is a very different one. Today, only 3,000 elephants, a fraction of the historical population, is thought to survive, mostly in the remote south east. If anything, the situation has worsened since the war ended, as the government has struggled to contain poaching. Moreover, Angola has become an important regional export hub for illegal wildlife products, including ivory and rhino horn, much of which comes from neighbouring countries Botswana, Namibia, DR Congo and Zambia.

“ Weak penalties for some offences coupled with critical gaps in legislation, had made Angola a country where wildlife crime was 'worth the risk'

The Angolan authorities, determined to turn this situation around, identified weaknesses in the legal system which were being exploited by international criminal gangs. Weak penalties for some offences, coupled with critical gaps in legislation, had made Angola a country where wildlife crime was 'worth the risk'. Through this IWT Challenge Fund project the Ministry of Environment and Attorney General's Office are aiming to build more robust protections against wildlife crimes. With the help of British NGO Stop Ivory, the Angolan authorities have worked to strengthen laws related to these crimes and have published a Guide to Wildlife Crime Charges. This guide helps prosecutors and investigators learn from international best practice and enforce the law to the maximum extent possible.

Angola further signalled its desire to combat IWT by joining the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) in 2015. The EPI, an alliance of African countries with common policies on elephant conservation, was established at the 2014 IWT Conference in London. In accordance with the EPI's commitment to end the ivory trade, Angola shut down its domestic ivory sales, including the Benfica open air market near Luanda, where researchers had found some 10,000 pieces of ivory on display as recently as 2014.

Through this IWT Challenge Fund project the Environmental Investigative Agency (EIA) undertook an analysis of illegal ivory trading in Angola, with the aim of supporting Angolan law enforcement agencies by providing them with recommendations.

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In January, Angola held a Wildlife Crime Sensitisation Workshop, opened by the Minister of the Environment, Hon Paula Coelho, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the UK Embassy in Angola, Primrose Lovett, with attendance from police officers and prosecutors from across the country.

In the coming weeks the government will host a further symposium on wildlife crime for the judiciary and, with the help of WCS Uganda, develop a national database of wildlife criminal offenders. Nationwide news coverage of all these activities has spread the message - Angola is now a country taking a stand against wildlife crime. For the sake of Angola's wildlife, and that of the wider region, this is a welcome development.

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This article features project IWT047 “Developing investigation and prosecution capacity to save Angola's elephants”, led by Stop Ivory, working in Angola.



Seized ivory, Credit: Martin Middlebrook



Director of TRAFFIC China and British Embassy Head of Climate and Environment, Credit: TRAFFIC

Chinese logistics companies commit to refusing transportation of illegal wildlife products

The domestic courier and logistics industries have developed rapidly due to the boom in the Chinese e-commerce trade - with a total of 50.71 billion packages delivered in 2018. Unfortunately, these companies have been used by criminals on occasion as a channel to transport wildlife and products illegally. Due to their key role in the e-commerce ecology, Chinese logistics companies have started to take responsibility for the products that they are transporting and have begun to refuse the transportation of illegal wildlife products after the internet companies joined the battle.

In May 2019, a total of 14 leading courier and logistics companies in China signed a Voluntary Code of Practice to Refuse Delivery of Illegal Wildlife and Products. This underlined their commitment to curbing illegal trade in wild animals and plants and to protect endangered wildlife species and biodiversity. The companies, who cover 90% of the country's courier and logistics companies, included domestic giants EMS, SF-Express and YTO-Express as well as well-known international companies like DHL and FedEx. A 1.5-day training workshop was held following the signing ceremony to build capacity within the industry.

Workshop participants were trained in species identification skills, and were able to share successes

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In terms of combatting illegal wildlife trade, the participation of courier and logistics industries is indispensable

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and lessons learned, while the Customs and Forest Police shared details of a number of seizures involving the courier and logistics industries. Participants also included representatives of companies operating in Viet Nam who spoke about how they would apply the advanced measures currently practiced by Chinese companies there.

In terms of combating illegal wildlife trade, the participation of courier and logistics industries is indispensable. The capacity building of the logistics companies and the establishment of a cooperation platform between law enforcement and internet companies are long-term tasks to be implemented in the future.

This article features project IWT042 “Combating Global Wildlife Cybercrime: Building on Success in China”, led by TRAFFIC International, which works in China, Vietnam, Tanzania and Cameroon.



Tabu Mary selling dried fish at the market, Credit: Village Enterprise

Increasing community engagement to tackle wildlife crime in Uganda

“The life of hiding and living in fear is over,” Tabu Mary, a former transporter of bushmeat says while rearranging the dried fish she sells in Diika Village, located in Kiryandongo, Uganda. She sits on the cinnamon-coloured earth with a white tarp laid out in front of her and stacks similar sized pieces of fish into short piles. “Before, when I was poaching, I couldn’t pay school fees, but now I am able, and I feel free and not harassed.”

In Kiryandongo, Uganda, hundreds of people live in extreme poverty along the border of Murchison Falls National Park. Poaching wild animals inside the Park is illegal and has been linked to poverty, but also to high levels of human-wildlife conflict. The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has a Community Conservation Unit to support community engagement around their national parks. The unit, responsible for managing human-wildlife conflict, is one of its most poorly resourced with only a few staff to cover vast areas. In addition to the limited staffing, there is very little coordination between UWA and NGOs who undertake community interventions to tackle wildlife crime.

Funded by the IWT Challenge Fund, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is leading a project to increase community engagement to tackle wildlife crime.

IIED’s project partners are: Village Enterprise (VE), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), UWA and the Uganda Conservation Foundation (UCF). The project team are undertaking training for UWA’s Community Conservation Unit and supporting the Unit to boost their profile and voice within UWA, with the aim of updating UWA’s Community Conservation Policy.

“**the team are also working with wildlife scouts - community volunteers who protect crops and livestock from Park animals**”

At Murchison Falls National Park, the team are hosting Coordination Forums to form better links between UWA and NGOs who are undertaking projects with local communities. The team are also working with wildlife scouts - community volunteers who protect crops and livestock from Park animals. WCS is providing training and equipment to the scouts, with VE implementing a poverty graduation programme with the aim to provide sustainable means of income.



Village Enterprise hosting a meeting with the Business Saving Group, Credit: Village Enterprise

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Now at the mid-way point of the project, more than 100 businesses have started growing and selling crops that wild animals are not drawn to, such as sunflowers, sesame plants, onions, and cabbage

Now at the mid-way point of the project, more than 100 businesses have started growing and selling crops that wild animals are not drawn to, such as sunflowers, sesame plants, onions, and cabbage. The community was involved throughout the programme from selecting the projects, to selling produce at markets, and setting up their Business Saving Groups. To date these initiatives have been very positively received by the communities involved. As Komakech Peter, a local community leader in Coopelwo Village noted, “When you don’t involve the community, the practice won’t be adopted”.

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People’s livelihoods have improved through the introduction of sustainable businesses and through the implementation of the Business Saving Group. The businesses coupled with the Savings Group are setting the foundations for incomes to be sustainable in the long term.

While the project team will be assessing impacts on wildlife crime in the final year, it is positive to note that there already seems to be a change. As noted by Chairman Ogwang Ben of Diiti Village “Before the project began, we would tell them to stop poaching and they would say ‘And do what?’ Now we can say stop poaching and do this instead.”

This article features project IWT036 “Implementing park action plans for community engagement to tackle IWT”, led by IIED, working in Uganda.



Briefing the participants before a practice exercise in Lac Tele, Credit: WCS, Christian Plowman

Back to basics: Tackling bushmeat trafficking by improving law enforcement investigations and policing skills in protected areas

As part of an IWT-funded project with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), former Scotland Yard detective Christian Plowman has been working in Brazzaville, Pointe Noire and Kinshasa to target the trafficking of protected species being sold for bushmeat.

Although the project is looking specifically at the urban trade, it makes sense to undertake activity to impact trade in forests that are targeted for urban trafficking as the trade emanates from outside of urban areas. One essential component of tackling any form of criminality is ensuring that law enforcement officials are appropriately trained and supported to use the existing legal mechanisms to ensure successful prosecutions.

This capability has a marked impact on traffickers' activities and the availability of protected species in bushmeat markets. It requires a very specific skillset, and through this project a ranger training programme will be introduced to ensure that officials possess the right tools for the job.

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The ranger training was delivered in two protected areas in northern Republic of the Congo, at Nouabale-Ndoki National Park and Lac Tele Community Reserve. This area of vast forest is a known source of trafficked bushmeat in Brazzaville. In February and May 2019, a cadre of agents based at each site undertook an intensive and essential component of training - designed and delivered by Christian. As a result of the training, trainees were equipped with the enforcement skills necessary to tackle wildlife and bushmeat traffickers.

The agents practiced evidential note taking, crime scene identification and management, managing evidential integrity and the chain of custody, dealing with detainees



Ecoguards surveying a crime scene using basic protocols in Lac Tele, Credit: WCS, Christian Plowman

and their human rights, and giving evidence in court, using fictional wildlife trafficking scenarios.

The intensive training course condensed the first few weeks of police training into a couple of days. The attendees were trained in the rudimentary elements of policing and how to gather and present evidence in front of a court of law. Ultimately, the project aims to ensure that wildlife crime perpetrators are prosecuted in a way which removes opportunities for cases to be thrown out or fall by the wayside. This happens far too often due to poor levels of evidential integrity, or a complete lack of evidence at all.

Christian described the training as short but intensive, with an opportunity for the rangers to learn and to retain several basic policing skills. The skills that the training focused on are often overlooked or forgotten by conservationists when focusing on counter-wildlife trafficking and are often lacking in other more basic ranger training programmes. The newly trained rangers are now geared towards acquiring evidence, aiding investigation progress, and maximising the chances of a case succeeding at court.

Ben Evans, the WCS site lead for the Lac Tele Community Reserve project reiterated "To have an effect on the bushmeat trade in cities, it's essential not to be narrowly focused on those urban areas. The provenance of the bushmeat is often from protected areas, so any input and support is essential to have an effect. This sort of training is critically important for our guards. Just being able to ensure that there is a certain level of integrity in wildlife crime cases that are prosecuted will have a huge impact, not only on the cases themselves, but how the officers and their actions are perceived by the judiciary and the community. The long-term benefits will be far reaching".

This article features project IWT054 "Tackling Central Africa's illegal urban wild meat demand", led by WCS, working in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.



Close encounter with an elephant in Zimbabwe, Credit: paulafrenchp (CC BY-ND 2.0)

High minimum sentences are hampering - not helping - the fight against wildlife crime

In many jurisdictions across Africa, high minimum prison terms for wildlife crimes are seen as a positive development that send out a strong deterrent message. However, in our experience, the effect of these sentences can be counterproductive. High penalties do not create a deterrent effect in and of themselves. Certainty does. Certainty that a suspect will be investigated thoroughly, prosecuted fairly, tried quickly, and sentenced in a predictable way.

Minimum penalties lead to increased delays along the criminal justice pathway and can hamper investigations and prosecutions. In the court outcomes from Zimbabwe earlier this year, this Space for Giants-led project found that only one in three people accused of IWT related charges attracting a high minimum term of nine years ended up pleading guilty. Where there are no such minimum terms, 75% pleaded guilty.

In Kenya, before high minimum terms were introduced for wildlife cases in 2013, 65% of accused people pleaded guilty. After the Act came into force, that fell to 19% and very few indeed plead guilty to crimes involving the most endangered species. A baseline survey of three major courts in Kenya in 2015 found the average felony trial

took 32 months to conclude; with misdemeanours in comparison only taking about 17 months.

In Tanzania, an amendment to the Economic and Organised Crime Act resulted in the introduction of sentences between 20 and 30 years that had little apparent distinction between the levels of seriousness of the offence. Many people applauded and saw this as a step in the right direction. However, it was clear that the results were not all positive. At the Kisutu magistrates' court in 2016 an accused person was committed for trial to face that penalty over a single ivory ring. The time, money, and other resources taken up with this one offence was probably never quantified.

The culture of adjournments is prevalent across many African countries and is a result of many factors. These factors include but are not limited to poor staffing levels, accused persons failing to attend, failures in disclosure, missing files, difficulties in securing witness attendance, and insufficient numbers of expert witnesses. Unfortunately, high minimum terms delay things further. These delays can result in the prospects of a conviction lessening due to witness fatigue, personnel being transferred, exhibits going missing, and increased opportunities for corruption and intimidation.

The incentives for a defendant to cooperate with law enforcement to pursue the 'bigger fish' are also lost. It is not in the interest of a poaching foot-soldier to help the police when facing a minimum term of nine years. High minimum terms fail to distinguish between a first-time offender found with an ivory ring, and someone with a warehouse of ivory with links to extensive criminal networks. Magistrates feel deeply uncomfortable at having no option but to apply these penalties even when they feel the crime does not warrant them.

By taking away all discretion, judges may be left with a temptation to acquit even the most watertight cases on technicalities that should not normally be allowed to derail a criminal trial. Legal precedent may be set that can skew the pitch for years. Moreover, in Kenya some magistrates have avoided applying high minimum terms by using existing legislation that provides a legal loophole. For example, a suspect that faces seven years in prison on one statute book but can also receive a perfectly legal sentence of community service.

Another common approach is to impose a fine with the high minimum term of imprisonment set as a 'default' in cases where the convicted person cannot pay. Which results in the rich avoiding jail and the poor, those of little value to the networks for which they once worked, going to prison.

There is a better way - issue binding sentencing guidelines that set a 'bandwidth' for minimum and maximum sentences for a given crime, dependant on the presence of aggravating and mitigating features. This is the approach used in the United Kingdom. Space for Giants has worked with the authorities in Uganda to introduce Africa's first such sentencing guidelines. However, these guidelines will only be implemented if the law is changed. Prosecutors must have the power to appeal in cases with suspect judgments, and an appeal court must be willing to uphold sentences imposed according to the guidelines.

The result of prescriptive sentencing guidelines can be greater consistency and predictability, with the opportunity for constructive plea-bargaining between defence and prosecution. It can also provide law enforcement officers, including prosecutors and judges, protection from corruption and intimidation. In the meantime, advocating for high minimum terms must stop until these issues are addressed.

This article features project IWT067 "Strengthening implementation of Zimbabwe's wildlife crime legal system", led by Space for Giants, working in Zimbabwe.



Elephants at a watering hole in Zimbabwe, Credit: Michael Sprague (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Project manager of TRAFFIC global office introducing major IWT trade routes, Credit: TRAFFIC

Newsletter Contacts

If you have any general queries about how the IWT Challenge Fund operates please e-mail us at IllegalWildlifeTrade@defra.gov.uk

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

This newsletter is produced quarterly. To include an article on your project in an upcoming edition, please contact us at 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

To date through the Challenge Fund, over £20 million has been allocated to 75 projects.