



AN INTEGRATED, MULTI-SCALE APPROACH TO COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN UGANDA



UNIVERSITY
of York



MAISHA
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Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade

Illegal Wildlife in Uganda:

Illegal wildlife trade and trafficking have become issues of global concern in the recent years. Thus, the political commitments in the March 2015 Kasane Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Statement and the February 2014 London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade Declaration emanated from the recognition of the significant scale and detrimental consequences of IWT. Uganda, which is party to these commitments, was named as one of the major wildlife trafficking routes for ivory and other wildlife products mostly originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, West Africa and parts of Southern Africa.

This project was therefore developed to curtail the increase in trafficking through Uganda and aimed to build the capacity of UWA to disrupt local and regional wildlife crime networks through effective intelligence, improved inter-agency collaboration and law enforcement strengthening at multiple levels.

Objectives:

The project intended to achieve the following outputs:

- a. An effective and functioning Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) collects

- and analyses intelligence information to increase arrests of middlemen.
- b. Through the work of NRCN Uganda, prosecuted offenders are held accountable for wildlife crimes committed.
 - c. UWA, police, judiciary, URA, and Uganda military share information and collaborate in law enforcement to improve anti-trafficking efforts through a Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force (WCCTF).
 - d. Local law enforcement officers in protected areas use SMART to efficiently and effectively conduct ranger patrols.

Areas of intervention:

One of the major impeding factors to combating IWT in Uganda was lack of capacity within the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to collect actionable intelligence and target middlemen involved in IWT. UWA staff lacked training in intelligence and coordination between them and other agencies like the Uganda People's Defence Force, the Uganda Police, and Customs to tackle trafficking through the border posts.

Bribery and corruption often rendered law enforcement efforts ineffective as well-connected suspects bribed their way out of prosecution. Poaching rates – especially of elephants, pangolins and hippos continued to rise since 2011 and this impacted wildlife populations and human beings. Tourism and community benefits from the park and community-park relationships were also negatively impacted.

Approach:

Our approach to addressing the issues was three-pronged:

- a) Target trafficking routes to the border posts by improving intelligence and coordination
- b) Ensure that bribery and corruption do not allow convicted offenders to escape the rule of law
- c) Improve anti-poaching patrolling in key protected areas hinged on the commitment and dedication of the government of Uganda through UWA to reverse the negative IWT trend and redeem Uganda's image internationally.

Achievements:

The project achieved notable successes over the two years of implementation. Some of these are highlighted below:

Improving Intelligence:

Tapping on the expertise of our partners Maisha Consulting Limited, an Israel-based company, this project has built the capacity of UWA to do

better intelligence at both headquarters and field level. Intelligence staff from UWA headquarters were particularly equipped in human and web intelligence tools and techniques and are now able to trace and identify actors in IWT and trafficking rackets nationally and internationally. UWA's Security and Law Enforcement Unit (SLEU) now has the necessary intel infrastructure and capacity to collect, store, analyse and utilize intelligence. Intelligence staff at field (park) level were also equipped with skills to set up and manage intelligence networks.

Enhancing Prosecution and Sentencing:

Through our project partners, the Natural Resource Conservation Network (NRCN), the project developed and implemented an approach to monitor court cases and minimize corruption in order to ensure that offenders pay their full fines or serve their maximum sentences in jail. The approach involved a combination of training judiciary staff, documenting court cases and using the media not only to bring otherwise concealed cases to the light but also to name and shame criminals. The general public was sensitized about IWT through electronic and print media campaigns.

The total number of articles published were 30,000.

Improving Anti-Poaching Patrolling Using SMART:

WCS together with the University of York (UoY) teamed up to enhance patrolling using innovative and more efficient methods of detecting illegal activities in protected areas. UoY created a software program to enable quick and robust analysis of patrol data stored in the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) database. The project also developed a SMART plug-in which will allow park wardens to analyse SMART data in new ways and then use the results of the analysis to deploy their rangers more effectively. This plug-in is capable of identifying parts of protected areas where illegal activities are likely to be prevalent and therefore enable better patrol planning and ranger deployment. This and the associate Smartphone App will also be made freely available to SMART users in 30 countries around the world. Visit <https://uganda.wcs.org/Initiatives/IWT-and-CWT.aspx> for more on SMART.

Coordinating Law Enforcement Efforts:

Coordination between UWA and the national security agencies including the Uganda Police and the Uganda People's Defence Forces to address IWT and trafficking has been enhanced. This coordination registered some notable successes in operations to burst some sophisticated trafficking syndicates. The Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) now appreciates the fact that any successful strategy to stamp out wildlife trafficking and to redeem Uganda's image requires the involvement of key institutions and decision-makers in their respective dockets to establish a coordination frame-

work to enhance strategic apex collaboration. This is the basis for the formation of a National Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force (NWCCTF); to address the escalating wildlife crime. High level engagements (at ministerial level) are currently underway.

Key Lessons Learned:

The project registered a number of lessons, they are enumerated below:

1. All wildlife cases need to be followed up from the time of arrest to prosecution processes and conviction. This way, the efforts invested in cracking down wildlife crime pay off.
2. It is important for the law enforcement team (whether UWA or police) to collaborate with the investigation and prosecution teams when dealing with wildlife cases. There is need for a well-coordinated mechanism of sharing information in order to maximise opportunities for holding offenders accountable for their actions. However, identifying the right staff within the various institutions and developing an MoU acceptable to all law enforcement agencies is not straightforward due to mistrust and the entrenched corruption among Uganda's law enforcement agencies.
3. In order to create public awareness and to demonstrate the gravity and consequences of wildlife crime, all conviction stories reported in the media need to include the history of the cases developed from the time of arrest though to prosecution and sentencing. This enables any irregularities in the case to be exposed but also compels those handling the cases to exercise prudence. The nature and magnitude of the sentence or fine also needs to be thoroughly dealt with to act as a warning to the potential offenders.
4. Despite the essential role it plays in combating wildlife crime, media reporting, is often limited by the inadequate capacity within the media houses to investigate and give expert opinion on the subject. In addition, wildlife stakeholders need to allocate adequate resources to media reporting to support a continuous awareness campaign so as to reach the public across the country that are advocating for wildlife conservation.
5. It is crucial for any open source conservation software to adhere to the standards thereof by ensuring thorough and proper


documentation, avail programming code to well-meaning users and incorporate thorough data security measures to protect the end-users. A number of these loopholes were identified in SMART and recommendations for improvement have been made.


About the Project Partners

Wildlife Conservation Society	WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. WCS has long-term commitments in dozens of landscapes and works in over 60 countries worldwide. WCS supported intelligence gathering and data analysis at UWA sites and helped UWA pilot improved ranger patrolling in key elephant strongholds.
Uganda Wildlife Authority	Established in 1996, UWA is a semi-autonomous government agency in Uganda responsible for wildlife conservation and management in 10 national parks, 12 wildlife reserves, 13 wildlife sanctuaries, and 5 community wildlife management areas. As the primary agency responsible for conservation, UWA was involved in all project activities both at strategic level and Protected Area level
Natural Resource Conservation Network	A national NGO, NRCN is a network of professionals whose aim is to ensure timely investigation, prosecution and reporting of wildlife crime in Uganda. NRCN supported UWA to prosecute offenders and ensure that they do not bribe their way out of paying fines or serving a prison term. NRCN worked with project partners to build capacity among wildlife officers, prosecutors, journalists.
Department of Biology, University of York (UoY)	Dr Colin Beale in the Department of Biology at the University of York (UoY), UK, previously worked with WCS and UWA to analyse law enforcement monitoring data collected over 15 years in Uganda's protected areas using MIST and SMART. He developed a method on which UoY develop a user-friendly SMART plug-in that enables SMART software users to easily run the analysis and use results to inform patrol planning.

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