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COMBATING WIDLIFE CRIME

Strengthening Anti-Poaching Techniques and Countering Wildlife Trafficking in Uganda Project

APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2022



The project is addressing critical capacity gaps within the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other security and law enforcement agencies to combat illegal wildlife trade.

BACKGROUND

Wildlife crime is at the heart of the tension between biodiversity conservation, human development and security. It is responsible for the escalated killing of threatened species such as elephants, pangolins, hippopotamuses and rhinoceros whose body parts and products are on high demand for making ornaments, traditional medicine, and other symbols of social status. The lucrative nature of wildlife crime attracts many to illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in ivory acquired from tusks, hippo teeth rhino horns and pangolin scales. These wildlife products are mainly trafficked from central, west, south and east Africa to East Asia where they gratify an insatiable demand.

While it is good that Uganda is a trading hub in East African that provides a favorable economic environment that spurs development in the region, this makes it vulnerable to illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Its porous borders, non-stringent law enforcement and limited capacity to combat or counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) further, exacerbate Uganda's vulnerability to wildlife crime.

IWT has reduced the global pangolin population by 80% over the last twenty years and 96 elephants are killed every day in Africa for ivory that is destined for China, Vietnam, Thailand, the United States, Japan, and other major markets. According to a study conducted by the University of Hong Kong on wildlife trade, 75% of the hippo teeth that go through Hong Kong originate from Uganda and Tanzania.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The International demand for ivory and other wildlife products for medicinal, commercial and domestic purposes is increasingly having a devastating impact on wildlife population and communities whose survival depends on tourism revenue. High value species in Uganda's national parks remain under threat from opportunistic poachers. Syndicates often take advantage of the corruption that is entrenched in almost all sectors of government to facilitate illegal wildlife trade at the expense of development. The failure of main crime-fighting institutions to effectively coordinate their work to combat wildlife crime creates disparities in efforts to conserve wildlife for the present and future generations. According to a study conducted by the Africa Programme at Chatham House on the global impact of illegal wildlife trade, some insurgents kill wildlife to exchange the products for arms used to finance their activities.

At the local level, wildlife crime stifles community livelihoods as more semi-illiterate and unemployed youth and women get lured into IWT networks by criminal gangs. The critical capacity gaps within the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other security and law enforcement agencies that hinder counter illegal wildlife trade efforts worsen the situation.

THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Increased capacity of UWA and improved coordination across law enforcement agencies to combat IWT by disrupting wildlife crime networks and reducing wildlife killing, providing improved security, livelihoods, and economic stability.

BENEFITS:

Ultimately, this project will benefit the elephant, lion, hippopotamus, and pangolin species as well as the entire Uganda human population through tourism revenue.

KEY OUTPUTS:

By the end of this project, we expect:

- a) Improved capacity to gather intelligence, conduct investigations, and arrests at national and park level within UWA that results in increased prosecution of wildlife crime offenders;
- b) Effective operation of the NWCCTF that contributes to improved IWT and CWT actions and results into increased numbers of detentions of perpetrators to combat of wildlife crime in Uganda;
- c) Human-wildlife conflict mitigation measures and livelihood initiatives led by communities around MFNP to scale up the furtherance of the Community-based park action plan developed under the previous IWT Challenge Fund grant to WCS and IIED to combat wildlife crime and,
- d) The experiences and lessons learned from this project to be documented and shared among stakeholders in order to increase the level of support for disrupting and dismantling IWT networks in Uganda - from the community level to the government and private sector actors.



Photo Credit : Andrew J Plumtre @wcs, Christian molango@ wcs, Congo sebastien assoignons@wcs

OUR APPROACH

Our approach to this project is hinged on our three core institutional conservation strategies:

DISCOVERING and understand priority wildlife and wild places through science

INSPIRING people to care about wildlife and wild places through education and public engagement.

PROTECTING priority wildlife and wild places through conservation action



In pursuit of the goals and objectives of this project;

- We are building on the work of other organizations and forging partnerships to combat IWT in Uganda,
- We are leveraging the vast experience and knowledge gained particularly from our WCS China program to understand the dynamics of IWT networks both locally and internationally;
- We are working with park-adjacent communities and community wildlife scouts to improve livelihoods and reduce human-wildlife-conflict. We are promoting activities that encourage the participation of women, men, youth and the elderly;
- We are leveraging our long history of working with UWA to improve information collection for decision-making (SMART, offenders' database).

OUR INTERVENTIONS

Our focus is on three key intervention areas to combat wildlife crime:

- **Enhancing national capacity**
- **Enhancing coordination & national efforts**
- **Engaging park-adjacent communities**

At the national and institutional level, our interventions include: strengthening the law enforcement by providing technical support, training, and equipment as well as infrastructure to UWA and other agencies. In this respect, we are taking action to enhance cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation among security and law enforcement agencies through the recently inaugurated National Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force (NWCCTF) led by UWA.

At the community Level, we are working with community wildlife scouts around Karuma Wildlife Reserve in Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, that not only devastates livelihoods but is also a driver of wildlife crime. We are also supporting park adjacent communities affected by IWT to improve their livelihoods and benefits through the implementation of wildlife-friendly enterprises such as beekeeping.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

The major roles of the entities involved include:

Wildlife Conservation Society

- Leading the project, coordinating the different components, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting of activities;
- Providing technical support, software and equipment to UWA and NWCCTF by offering training support in intelligence information gathering, analysis, and reporting;
- Supporting maintenance of key databases and helping in the development of information-sharing systems and platforms.

Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)

- Gathering, storing and securely sharing better intelligence information to expedite action to combat wildlife crime to Uganda,
- Leading intelligence operations, investigations into wildlife crime cases and conducting prosecutions promptly.
- Working closely with WCS to scale up community wildlife scouts and livelihood initiatives aimed at mitigating HWC and improve community livelihoods intended to enhance community support for conservation.

National Wildlife Coordination Task Force (NWCCTF)

- The NWCCTF taking the lead in combating illicit wildlife trade and trafficking in Uganda;
- Member Institutions conducting joint counter wildlife crime activities and supporting national anti-poaching efforts at policy and strategic levels;
- NWCCTF working on inter-agency enforcement operation protocols to guide the sharing of intelligence information between and among member agencies.

GET INVOLVED

Visit our website; <https://uganda.wcs.org/>

Read about strengthening anti-poaching techniques and countering wildlife trafficking in Uganda here: <https://https://uganda.wcs.org/strengthening-anti-poaching-techniques-and-countering-wildlife-trafficking.aspx>.
Project reports and other relevant links will be posted here as we produce them.

CONTACT US

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About the funders



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