

## **Voices of the communities**

**Allies:** We, the indigenous peoples and local communities, are key strategic allies in combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade, and we call on you to listen to us and recognise and respect our important role. We are not stakeholders, we are rights-holders. Our lands hold vast wildlife populations that we want to safeguard for our children and grandchildren. We are the first line of defence against poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Many of us are successfully managing wildlife on our lands and have successfully reduced poaching and IWT, and increasingly we are working collectively with other communities in wildlife management

**Impact of IWT:** We are the people who currently feel the direct impacts of illegal wildlife trade, with incursions onto our territories to steal our timber, our fish, our wild meat, species that are important for culture, for income, medicine and other uses. Our legal, sustainable wildlife products face unfair competition in the market from illegal products – sometimes stolen from our own lands.

It is us – our communities - that should benefit from sustainable use and legal trade of wildlife and wildlife products – we are protecting and managing our wildlife and habitats, and poaching and IWT is stealing from us.

**Sustainable use of wildlife:** is important to our cultures, our livelihoods, our food security, for income, and to educate our children. Sustainable use is fundamental to stopping illegal use and trade of wildlife. We want to strengthen community management of wildlife, and call on governments to recognise our customary practices, and to legally empower us to continue and strengthen our role in conservation. We continue to develop management plans to address species declines, stop unsustainable use and illegal use, manage wildlife use and

trade sustainably and protect and conserve our wildlife and habitats for our children and grandchildren, and these management plans need further support.

**Capacity-building:** We urge the effective intervention of our governments and request partnerships with NGOs, donors and experts to strengthen our existing skills and capacity in wildlife management, in monitoring wildlife and ensuring use is sustainable, in managing value chains, in value-adding and processing of wildlife, and in marketing.

**Knowledge:** We hold important knowledge from our ancestors. We want to share this, and we want our knowledge to be recognised and integrated into management. We need support to educate and pass our knowledge on to children and grand children.

**Institutions and organisations:** Organisation is critical for strong community management. We need strong institutions at every level – we need community associations and enterprises to work together to secure greater benefits from wildlife, national bodies to represent our interests, and networks across the region. We need support to achieve this.

**Policy and regulation:** National laws and policies that affect us need to:

1. respect international laws and policies such as ILO 169
2. be developed with proactive consultation and agreement with indigenous peoples and local communities respecting their rights to self-determination and FPIC
3. be inclusive of us
4. support us, and recognise and strengthen community rights to manage wildlife, prevent conflicts or reduce the costs of living with wildlife.

Some of us feel the impacts of heavy-handed enforcement against IWT, when we are following traditional practices or providing for our families.

Wildlife crime is a crime against wildlife and a crime against us. Right now, the battle is being lost. With us, we can win. We call on governments and all partners here to recognise and respect our rights and our role in combating IWT.