

Engaging communities to tackle illegal wildlife trade – lessons from Southeast Asia, South America and sub-Saharan Africa

October 2022



People
Not Poaching



Species Survival Commission



Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group



SOUTHERN TANZANIA ELEPHANT PROGRAM



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Cover photo: Crocodile community wardens on patrol.
Credit: Pablo Sinovas, FFI

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Executive summary

The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is a global conservation and development challenge, affecting many species of fauna and flora as well as the livelihoods of those dependent on wildlife. Since 2014, concerns over the rising threat of poaching to high-value species, such as pangolins, elephants and timber, have led to a number of policy commitments to tackle IWT.

These fall under four priorities: eradicating the market for illegal wildlife products; building effective legal frameworks; strengthening law enforcement and supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic development. However, analysis undertaken between 2016–2019 showed that least progress had been made against commitments under the final category. In addition, community-focused projects were allocated less funding than protected area management and law enforcement approaches. We expect little has changed in recent years.

This is echoed in practice, with many governments focusing on top-down strategies and militarised conservation tactics to reduce IWT. But these approaches can alienate local people and often fail to address the factors that lead people to poach in the first place. In contrast, there is broad agreement that anti-IWT approaches should aim to empower and incentivise communities who live alongside wildlife to engage in conservation efforts. This includes recognising community rights, mitigating human-wildlife conflict (HWC), strengthening local livelihoods, providing community-level benefits, and including community members in ranger or scout programmes.

But without a blue-print approach to community-based interventions to tackle IWT there is uncertainty about how best to design and implement these projects. The People not Poaching platform (peoplenotpoaching.org) aims to fill this knowledge gap by building the evidence base of what works, what doesn't work, and why in community-based approaches to reduce IWT.

This report provides insights into a diverse set of initiatives from Africa, Asia and South America, and highlights some of the key lessons learned from these approaches, which are predominantly externally supported by local, national or international conservation organisations.

Based on information collected on People not Poaching, plus three regional workshops with representatives from twelve case studies featured on the platform, this report presents evidence to show that there are many commonalities between the factors that have led to, or limited, success across case studies. Collectively, these community-based anti-IWT approaches reveal a series of overarching lessons learned, which include important considerations when funding, designing and implementing anti-IWT interventions.

Specifically, the lessons emphasise the need to:

1. **Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife**
2. **Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from living with wildlife**
3. **Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context**
4. **Respect and incorporate existing community structures and norms and build on them wherever possible**
5. **Develop long-term relationships to build trust**
6. **Establish multi-level partnerships that are driven by communities**
7. **Pay attention to challenges related to political instability, corruption or militarised conservation.**

None of these lessons are new but reflect wider learning from decades of experience with community-based conservation. At times, the urgency of tackling IWT, and the tendency to default to a top-down, law enforcement-based response, can lead these lessons to be forgotten. The lessons apply equally to all those who fund, design or implement projects to reduce IWT.

A broader lesson for conservation donors in particular – and reflecting lessons from other sectors, such as climate change adaptation where the importance and effectiveness of local action is becoming more and more evident¹ – is the **need to better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT.**

¹ See for example the internationally endorsed Principles for Locally-Led Adaptation <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-locally-led-adaptation>

Acronyms

ASOCAIMAN	Association for the Conservation of the American Crocodile in Cispotá Bay
CIT	Centro para la Investigación de Tiburones
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CC	Conservation Cooperative
FFI	Fauna & Flora International
HWC	Human-Wildlife Conflict
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IUCN SULI	International Union for Conservation of Nature Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
KSNP	Kerinci Seblat National Park
POKOK	Project on the keys to understanding orangutan killing or Pola kematian orangutan dan konflik manusia
PLCN	Prey Lang Community Network
RKM GR	Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi Game Reserve
SRT	Save the Rhino Trust
STEP	Southern Tanzania Elephant Program
SWM	Sustainable Wildlife Management
ToC	Theory of Change
VGS	Village Game Scout
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WMA	Wildlife Management Area

1. Introduction



A man carries in his basket some young black hornbills he found in the forest, to keep as a pet in his home in West Kalimantan. Credit: Paul Thung.

Background on community engagement in tackling IWT

IWT is a global conservation and development challenge, affecting many species of fauna and flora as well as the livelihoods of those dependent on wildlife. Since 2014, concerns over the rising threat of poaching to high-value species, such as pangolins, elephants and timber, have led to several international policy forums with four overarching priorities:

1. Eradicating the market for illegal wildlife products
2. Building effective legal frameworks
3. Strengthening law enforcement
4. Supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic development

These policy forums – held in London in 2014, Kasane in 2015, Hanoi in 2016 and again in London in 2018 – along with others, recognised the importance of community engagement in efforts to tackle IWT. The resulting statement or declaration from each of these events made several commitments in this regard, which can be grouped into seven broad themes (WWF and IIED, 2019):

- Tackling negative impacts of IWT
- Supporting sustainable livelihood opportunities
- Supporting community-led conservation
- Supporting wildlife-based livelihoods/benefits
- Involving local people as law enforcement partners
- Reducing the costs of living with wildlife
- Supporting information sharing about community-based approaches

Despite this recognition, analysis of these commitments prior to the last London Conference showed that least progress had been made against those in the *supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic development category* (WWF and IIED, 2019). Similarly, a World Bank report showed that just 15% of the US\$1.3 billion invested between 2010 and 2016 in efforts to reduce IWT was allocated to community-focused projects (Wright et al., 2015). This was in comparison to 65% allocated to protected area management and law enforcement during the same period. Although these analyses are now a few years old, we don't expect this pattern to have significantly shifted.

This is echoed in practice, with the governments of many IWT source countries focusing on law enforcement, including militarised conservation tactics, to reduce poaching. Whilst the scale of IWT and its links to criminal networks appear to validate the use of law enforcement methods, heavy-handed approaches can have unintended consequences that worsen local attitudes towards wildlife (Massé et al., 2017; Lunstrum and Givá, 2020). This includes increasing conflict between local communities and protected area management, not infrequently leading to human rights abuses, as has been reported across parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.² Top-down approaches may not only disincentivise local people to engage in conservation (Cooney et al., 2016; Ngorima et al., 2020), but also fail to target the socio-economic inequalities that lead people to poach in the first place (Challender and MacMillan, 2014; Hübschle and Shearing, 2018; Lunstrum and Givá, 2020).

Since the last major IWT conference, a major global assessment (IPBES, 2019) has highlighted the effectiveness of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in conserving biodiversity. There is also growing recognition among practitioners and policy makers that upholding community rights is both a legal and a moral obligation that must be supported regardless of whether it leads to positive conservation outcomes. In the context of efforts to tackle IWT, this increasing recognition includes understanding that it is vital to include IPLCs as key partners in initiatives aimed at reducing wildlife crime, particularly because:

1. Relying only on law enforcement to stop poaching is difficult, expensive, and only rarely effective

Community members live near and with wildlife, so even the best-resourced law enforcement will struggle without community buy-in

2. Communities have borne costs of conservation and anti-IWT efforts have worsened this

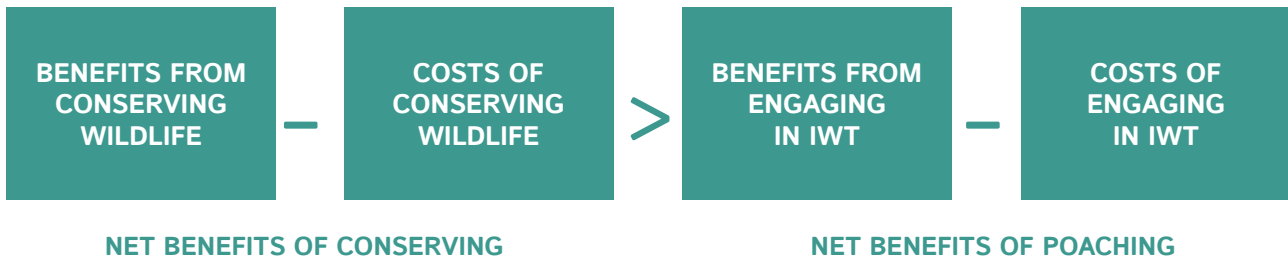
Anti-poaching efforts often target IPLCs, and have led to dispossession, loss of livelihood options, social impacts and human rights abuses

3. Empowering communities and increasing the value of wildlife to them can have much broader conservation benefits

Community-based approaches can build support for wildlife as a land use and tolerance for its impacts more broadly

² For example see *The Big Conservation Lie* by John Mbaria and Mordecai Ogada, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/uk/tag/world-wildlife-fund>; <https://minorityrights.org/pnkb/> and <https://www.wrm.org.uy/publications/struggles-for-the-right-to-live-in-forests-declared-protected-areas-in-india>

Figure 1: Wildlife is more likely to be conserved where net benefits (financial and non-financial) of retaining it are greater than net benefits of engaging in IWT. (Source: Cooney et al., 2016)



4. Communities can be powerful and positive agents in combatting IWT

Stewardship rights and benefits from conservation can motivate communities to be the ‘eyes and ears’ of enforcement

5. It is not just about benefits but also about reducing costs

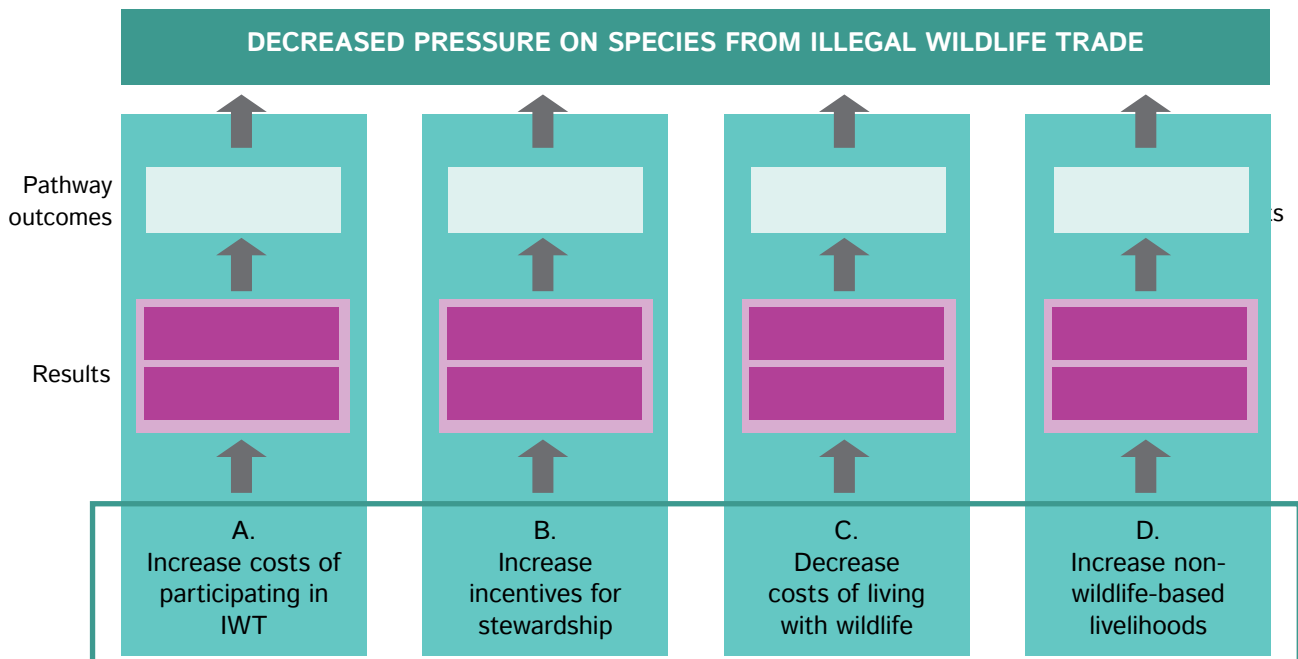
Even where benefits are accrued, communities do not tolerate continued HWC well

As communities typically face costs from conservation, and because socio-economic inequalities often drive people to engage in poaching, it is assumed that for anti-IWT approaches to be successful the net benefits associated with wildlife conservation must be greater than the net costs as illustrated in Figure 1.

Community engagement to tackle IWT covers a wide range of approaches, which might include recognising community rights over wildlife, mitigating HWC, strengthening livelihoods, providing community-level benefits such as access to health clinics and schools, and including community members in ranger or scout programmes. In 2016, a theory of change (ToC) was developed to guide, monitor and assess how these approaches can reduce poaching. The ToC helps to organise these different types of approach into four pathways for achieving impact, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Communities are diverse, so to be effective, community-engagement approaches must consider the cultural, socio-economic and environmental factors of each local context (Biggs et al., 2016). This means that no two community-based approaches across these four

Figure 2: This Theory of Change, developed by Biggs et al. (2016) presents four different but mutually supportive pathways to engage communities in tackling IWT.



pathways look the same, leading to uncertainty about best practice and effectiveness (Roe and Booker, 2019; Wilson-Holt and Roe, 2021).

This challenge has long been recognised, and the Kasane IWT Conference in 2015 made a recommendation to “Establish, facilitate and support information-sharing mechanisms... to develop knowledge, expertise and best practice in practical experience of involving local people in managing wildlife resources, and in action to tackle IWT”. The People not Poaching platform (peoplenotpoaching.org)

responds to this recommendation and, since 2018, has been building a strong body of evidence on different approaches to community engagement and their effectiveness in tackling IWT.

This report presents some of the case studies that have been collected to date and highlights a series of lessons learned from across all the approaches on the platform. It aims to inform decision-making on the funding, design and implementation of future anti-IWT projects and to demonstrate that communities must be integral to these efforts.

The People not Poaching platform is an online portal developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (IUCN SULi) to document examples of community-based approaches to tackling IWT and build evidence on their effectiveness. The platform was launched in October 2018 and is intended to help build understanding about what works, what doesn't work, and why, in community-based anti-IWT interventions. By showing that there are plenty of examples of success, the People not Poaching platform provides a resource for conservation practitioners, policy makers and IPLCs, plus others involved in the design of anti-IWT interventions, to learn from best practice in these approaches.

The People not Poaching Platform Overview

117

Case studies

54

Countries

168

Species



29%
Focus on
African elephants



24%
Big cats



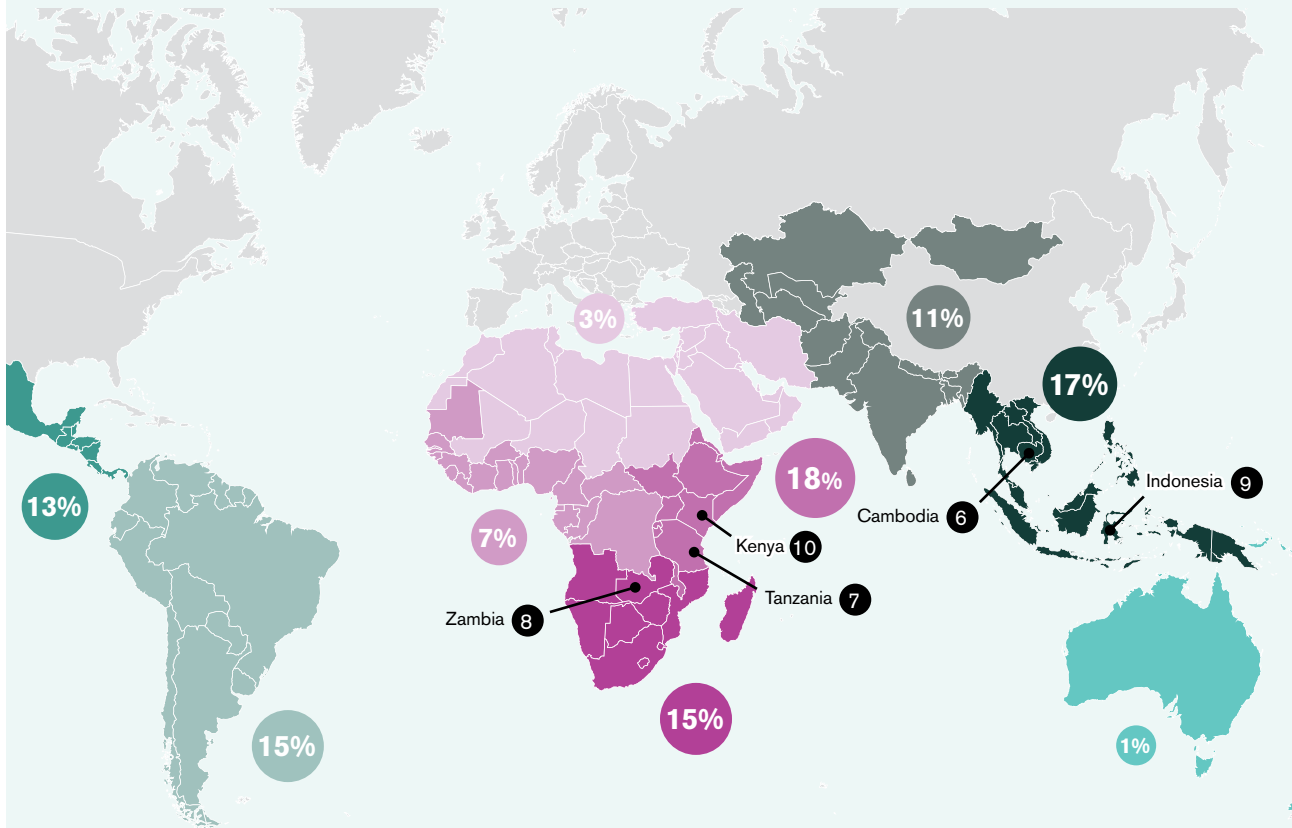
12%
Pangolins



11%
Timber



10%
African rhino



82% are strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

68% are increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

35% are decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

64% are supporting non-wildlife based livelihood opportunities

73% are improving education and awareness about conservation and IWT

2. Lessons learned



Wapichan fisherman in Karawaimiin Tawa. Credit: Marlon del Aguila, SWM Guyana.

This section discusses key lessons derived from across the community-based anti-IWT interventions collected on the People not Poaching platform. To arrive at these lessons, information from the case studies on what has and hasn't worked, and why, was analysed and distilled into a series of key messages. This information was further discussed at three workshops with case study representatives from across three regions – Southeast Asia, South America and sub-Saharan Africa – and subsequently refined into eight overarching lessons. These case studies are discussed in detail in Section 4 of this report and are used to illustrate how the lessons have played out in practice. Most case studies on People not Poaching are supported or led by external local, national or international conservation organisations. The lessons are therefore primarily relevant for this audience, as well as other organisations involved in funding, designing or implementing anti-IWT initiatives.

None of the lessons discussed in this section are new or surprising. Instead, they reinforce what we already know, reflecting decades of research on the broader topic of community-based natural resource

management, which has continually emphasised the importance of enhancing local rights, devolving decision-making power and ensuring benefits outweigh costs, amongst other principles. These messages have also specifically been reiterated in recent analyses of engaging communities in reducing IWT (Cooney et al., 2018; Roe and Booker, 2019) – suggesting that a sense of urgency that accompanies addressing the IWT 'crisis' by punitive actions remains the prevailing narrative of those looking to fund, design or implement anti-IWT interventions.

Since the publication of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) global assessment in 2019, the evidence that local people are the most effective stewards of wildlife has become more and more prominent. In other sectors too – notably climate change – the need for solutions to be locally-led and based on local priorities has been internationally endorsed. The overarching message of this report is therefore that these lessons need to be heard and acted on, not just endlessly reiterated in a dialogue of the deaf.

1 Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

For community-based wildlife management to succeed, IPLCs must have rights to make decisions about and benefit from conservation. Although this has been recognised for decades, a lack of rights over land and resources remains a key barrier to effective implementation, and can lead to resentment towards conservation practitioners, incentivising unsustainable resource use and engagement in IWT (Cooney et al., 2018). Recognising community rights related to wildlife governance and management is therefore fundamental prior to designing and implementing anti-IWT interventions.

In Tanzania, Honeyguide have found that Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) with separate management and governance functions are likely to have greater success, but only if communities remain in control of decision-making. WMAs are required by law to be managed by elected members of the communities, but in many cases these elected members lack the capacity to do so efficiently. It has proven more effective to have a clear split between governance and management functions, such as by employing external managers – as long as ownership over decisions remains with the communities. For example, in one WMA, Honeyguide found that

community members feel that they have lost their sense of ownership over their land because they perceive external stakeholders to have greater power over decision making.

Project implementers should also acknowledge that IPLCs won't necessarily view conservation efforts as being as morally superior to other sectors interested in their land, such as mining. If conservation practitioners do not respect local rights and access to resources, then IPLCs might see the intervention as a form of land grabbing. In Guyana, local communities do have land tenure, however this doesn't cover all customary land. This is a major barrier to effective wildlife management as species move across areas under different management arrangements (community governed vs. state governed) and because it demotivates communities who feel their full rights are not being recognised. The Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Guyana project is therefore working with the National Fisheries Department and the Wildlife Commission to ensure that National Wildlife Regulations in the country are developed in accordance with customary use and laws related to terrestrial wildlife and fisheries.

2 Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

It is just as important to address the costs of conservation as it is to provide conservation related benefits as part of efforts to reduce IWT. IPLCs face significant challenges from living with wildlife, from livestock losses, threats to personal security and competition for land and resources, which can foster negative attitudes towards conservation and provide incentives to engage in illegal activities. Before Honeyguide implemented measures to mitigate HWC in northern Tanzania, there was a general feeling amongst communities that conservation organisations and the government valued wildlife over people. After just a few months of investing in crop protection, plus other activities to prevent and reduce HWC, attitudes began to change, and communities started to trust and befriend crop protection teams.

Anti-IWT interventions should be designed so that IPLCs receive net benefits from wildlife (benefits such as payments for ecosystem services or income/employment opportunities minus costs of conservation), which must be greater than the net benefits generated from engaging in IWT (benefits such as income from illegal rhino horn minus costs such as prison sentences) (Cooney et al., 2016). Benefits should aim to address the specific needs of the community and target the reasons why people engage in poaching, for example by reducing crop

raiding or livestock predation. Where benefits are not as high as expected, and if costs of living near wildlife remain high, IPLCs could be more likely to engage in IWT either actively or passively, as well as lose motivation to participate in conservation efforts. In Tanzania, the Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP) found that a beehive fence model to deter elephants only worked in areas with certain ecological conditions. In the areas where it was less effective, the model was more effort than benefit for communities and this led to a corresponding drop in participation and enthusiasm for the project.

Another important factor in changing attitudes and behaviour towards wildlife is to link benefits to conservation outcomes, for example by making positive associations between local priorities, such as access to education or health programmes, and the species the intervention is working to protect. In Venezuela, communities living on the coast are often financially dependent on IWT. Economic benefits, such as income from whale shark focussed ecotourism activities, have therefore been particularly effective at reducing poaching of the species. The organisation Centro para la Investigación de Tiburones (CIT) have found that this is because these communities understand that this income is both-long term and stable compared to money earned from IWT.

3 Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

Interventions to reduce IWT are more likely to be successful when project implementers have taken time to understand the local context by listening to IPLCs needs and values. Rather than being externally designed, projects should draw on local knowledge and priorities so that solutions are responsive to local contexts and cultures. Communities aren't static, so it is important to acknowledge that there will be different opinions even within close-knit groups and that what works in one area may not in another. Across their project sites, Planet Indonesia have found that community needs and any subsequent reasons for engaging in IWT vary. For example, one of the villages is located near to a local hospital, meaning a healthcare programme was less important to this community than a literacy programme. Listening ensures that programmes are cognizant of these nuances, which include gender-specific needs. In total,

65% of Planet Indonesia's beneficiaries are women and they have found this to have significantly reduced local involvement in IWT.

Listening to IPLC needs should not be a one-off process at the beginning of a project, but instead be undertaken throughout all stages of the project lifespan. Decisions should always be focused on and integrate local views, rather than impose them, with proposals that come directly from IPLCs usually more effective than those implemented solely by an external party.

Significant changes can also occur within the timeframe of a project – both within a community and regarding the target species – so it's important to be adaptive and open to restructuring where necessary. In Cambodia, society is rapidly changing meaning that communities who have traditionally protected the Siamese crocodile are increasingly moving to cities,

whilst others are moving into areas where crocodiles live who have no long-term connection to the area. People who are not accustomed to living alongside the species are often significantly more afraid of them.

As a result the Cambodia Crocodile Conservation Project sees a need to implement awareness raising activities in these areas to demonstrate that people and crocodiles can coexist harmoniously.

4 Respect existing community structures and norms and build on them wherever possible

It is important to incorporate existing social mechanisms into projects and engage local or religious leaders through their traditional structures and communication channels, such as WMA leadership teams or councils of elders. Engaging with these leaders can help to enhance the level of support for conservation interventions, send powerful messages about the problems of engaging in wildlife crime and underpin sustainable resource decisions. It is also much more effective to leverage existing community decision makers to help articulate new ideas and concepts to a wider audience.

Local culture is important and conservation interventions that do not take the time to understand these nuances risk introducing formalities that are inappropriate. This understanding also aids the

design of conservation incentives as part of anti-IWT interventions, for example, by building on and strengthening cultural traditions that are aligned to conservation objectives, such as where hunting a particular species is taboo and prohibited by leaders.

It is also important to respect the ways that IPLCs have traditionally used, managed and cared for the environment. This shouldn't be limited to the species at risk of IWT, but all resources important to local livelihoods, such as medicinal plants and other non-timber forest products. Project implementers should also take time to understand how cultural or spiritual relationships that IPLCs have with the environment might affect their decisions and feelings about conservation interventions.

5 Develop long-term relationships to build trust

Establishing trusting relationships between project implementers and IPLCs should not be a short-term process but one built over time from low key, but frequent, engagement. Regular and relatively direct contact, based on a mutual understanding of local needs and priorities, is important to maintain project momentum and motivation to participate in conservation efforts. For example, when exploring reasons behind a decrease in poaching activities in certain areas, Planet Indonesia found that a major factor was the trust built between community members and Planet Indonesia staff, who spend time living and working in villages. This meant that where the presence of poaching risked programme compliance factors, community members pressured non-participants to stop poaching and join the programme to ensure that services continued. Social and economic services were identified through impact

assessments as not only addressing barriers and reducing the opportunity costs of conservation, but also creating a 'good will effect' where community partners believed and trusted Planet Indonesia.

Building relationships over longer time scales, i.e. beyond the typical 2–5 years of most anti-IWT interventions, is also important for ongoing sustainability. In Kerinci Seblat National Park, a long-term approach to Sumatran tiger protection has been a key factor in reducing poaching of the species. It is thought that as awareness of the Fauna & Flora International (FFI)-led project spread, fewer people began engaging in IWT. Conversely, tiger poaching has been found to be much higher in areas with shorter-term interventions and a smaller on the ground presence.

6 Establish multi-level partnerships that are driven by communities

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical to successful interventions, but ultimately community-based organisations or governance structures and the people they represent should have overall responsibility for project design and implementation. This means devolving wildlife management structures to the lowest level, with support provided by external agencies who should empower IPLCs to take ownership of project objectives rather than taking the lead themselves. In Guyana, the SWM project was designed to strengthen existing local initiatives that lacked capacity to fully implement activities to reduce illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade effectively. This has resulted in a programme structure where communities in the Rupununi region have overall responsibility for project objectives and outcomes, helping to ensure sustainability once the programme has officially ended.

It is still important to form strong partnerships, but locally-led institutions should be in control of who they partner with and in what capacity. For example, in Namibia the government recognises the importance of local rights to manage wildlife and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism remains a key stakeholder on the Conservancy Rhino Ranger Programme. In this case, a multi-partner approach that harnesses each stakeholder's skills and expertise in a way that benefits both rhinos and local people has been critical for achieving effective rhino conservation throughout the country.

Because success requires support from a wide variety of sources it is important to be open to collaboration and not be territorial. Conservation organisations should acknowledge their limits and be willing to partner with and leverage expertise from those in other sectors.

7 Pay attention to challenges related to political instability, corruption or militarised conservation

It is important to acknowledge that the protection of the environment has become a dangerous activity in countries with corrupt governments and powerful players interested in exploitative industries, such as illegal logging. IPLCs who find themselves on the frontline of conservation face harassment, illegal arrest, threats to their lives and those of their families, and death, because there is no government will to protect them. In 2020, the government of Cambodia banned the Prey Lang Conservation Network (PLCN) from entering the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. Members of the network have been threatened and arrested in a pattern of attempts to silence and intimidate environmental activists in Cambodia, where bogus charges and suspended sentences are frequently used to suppress peaceful activism while logging cartels pursue their illegal activities with impunity. Amnesty International³ has called on the Cambodian authorities to allow independent environmental groups like PLCN to undertake unrestricted monitoring of illegal deforestation and for the Cambodian courts to deliver genuine justice

in cases involving human rights defenders and environmental activists.

Project funders, designers and implementers must also acknowledge that exclusionary and militarised conservation – which can for example deny people access to natural resources or force them from their lands – drives deep-rooted mistrust and undermines conservation efforts. Across the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, conservancies have evicted IPLCs from their traditional lands, a practice still ongoing with the eviction of Maasai from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Northern Tanzania.⁴ Before the formation of Nashulai Maasai Conservancy, local people from the surrounding area sometimes engaged in poaching as they were not incentivised to participate in conservation. Key to changing the mindset of the residents of Nashulai was ensuring that all landowners would be paid for leasing their land, that no one would be displaced, and that livestock loss would be compensated for.

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/cambodian-environmental-activist-convicted/>

⁴ <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/looming-threat- eviction>

Project implementers must therefore ensure they demonstrate their commitment to care for people as well as wildlife. Several case studies highlighted that IPLCs felt that their wellbeing, including protecting their human rights, were a lower priority to conservation organisations than, for example, maintaining good relationships with government partners. In Indonesia, the POKOK initiative observed a successful interaction between NGO workers and villagers, which involved a farmer whose jackfruit tree had been raided by a wild orangutan earmarked for translocation. The villagers held the NGO responsible

for the damage, but the NGO was unable to pay compensation for the actions of wild orangutans. The individual staff members eventually defused this tension by taking the time to explain conservation work (and the limits of their capacities) to the farmer and making a special effort to keep the orangutan away from his fruit trees and crops after that. This personal connection was vital in bringing the farmer onside and improving the reputation of the conservation NGO in the area, particularly by proving that it cared for people too, not just animals.

8 Better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT

Despite the effectiveness of locally-led approaches to reduce IWT (and wildlife management more generally) being well recognised, very little money makes its way down to the local level as national, and particularly international organisations very rarely share funding with local groups. More needs to be done to remove the barriers that inhibit IPLC participation in conservation and to develop mechanisms for getting money down to the local level.

In addition, donor cycles that do not align to locally-led conservation solutions limits the impact and sustainability of these types of intervention. Short-term and inflexible funding models, particularly those tied to immediate goals or responding to emerging 'crises', leave little room for scoping and trying new approaches. This is problematic when working on complex issues, such as IWT, which are unlikely to be solved in a three or four year period and which require solutions based on individual contexts. It would be more sustainable to aim for less frequent but longer-term funding mechanisms to support anti-IWT projects, however this requires a broader shift amongst the donor community. Longer-term funding models, particularly that focus on regular lesson learning, could also help ensure that project activities are both iterative and rigorously evaluated.

In Tanzania, STEP have found that new contexts require trialling interventions before they can be scaled. Several of the human-elephant conflict mitigation methods they trialled did not work due to climatic and market factors. For example, the

use of chilli briquettes failed because the initial trial design required farmers to grow hot peppers, rather than using locally available varieties. STEP also struggled with low participation, mistrust, and a lack of transparency among members and their leaders in VSLAs, due in part to not frequent enough follow up.

Donors also need to acknowledge that there is often a disconnect between their expectations and on the ground realities, which sometimes leads to exit strategies that are time and budget based, and therefore often unrealistic. Also, complicated compliance and reporting requirements are often beyond the capacity of local level organisations, creating a dichotomy between supporting locally-led approaches but at the same time remaining compliant to donor requirements. This can limit funding opportunities to English-speaking organisations with experience in writing complex proposals and project reports. For example, as an Indigenous owned and run conservancy, Nashulai lacks the advantages that foreign-owned or run conservancies have in gaining access to international funding opportunities. This has led to periods where scouts have had to work unpaid and where technological upgrades, such as purchasing smartphones (to use conservation apps), have become too expensive. Funding shortfalls also limit opportunities to expand Nashulai to include neighbouring communities, preventing the restoration of a further 5,000 acres in the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem.

3. Community-based approaches to tackling IWT

Evidence and lessons from People not Poaching case studies



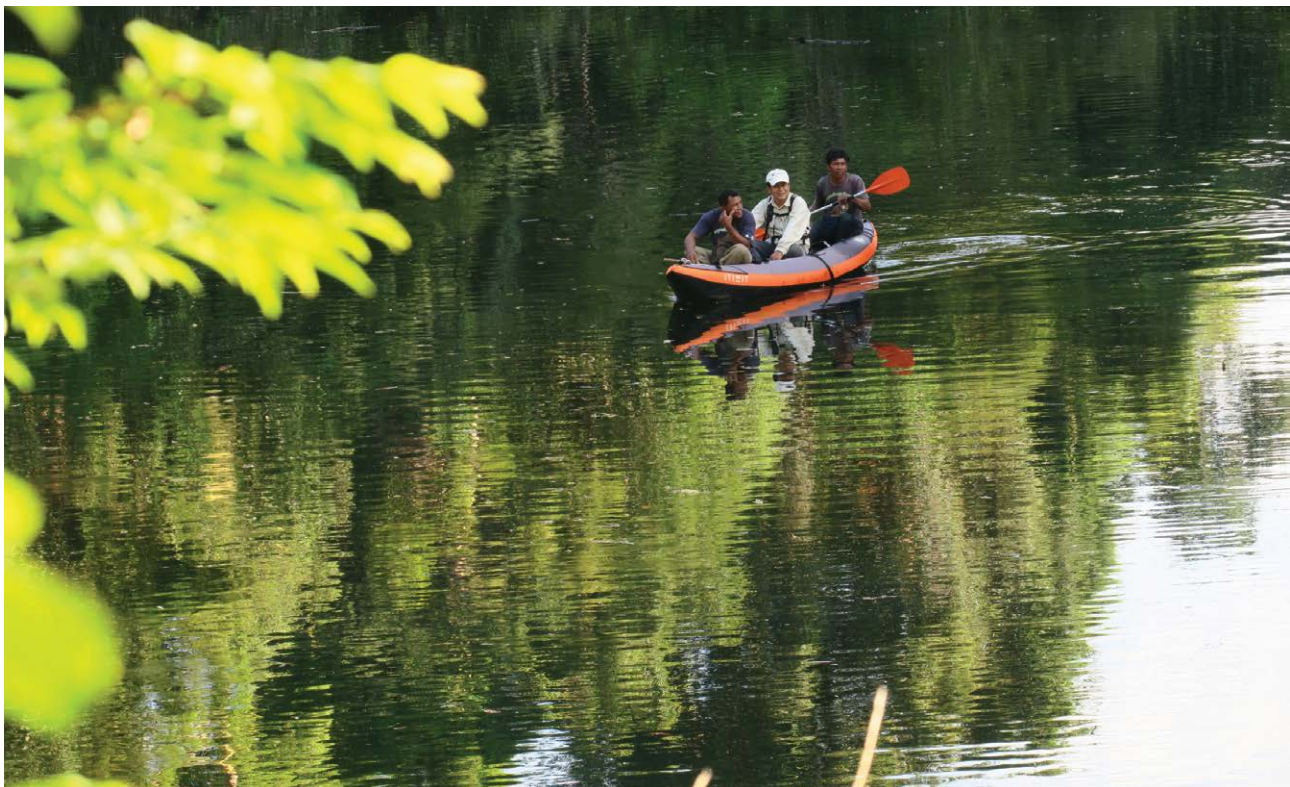
Nashulai warriors. Credit: Nashulai Maasai Conservancy.

Southeast Asia

Cambodia Crocodile Conservation Project

Fauna & Flora International

SPECIES AFFECTED BY IWT	Siamese Crocodile (<i>Crocodylus siamensis</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Live animals, skins and meat
COUNTRY	Cambodia
LOCATION	Focal areas include Veal Veng Marsh and the Areng River, both in the Cardamom Mountains, near settlements of the Indigenous Khmer Daeum
TIMEFRAME	2000-present



FFI and community wardens monitoring crocodile habitat. Credit: Pablo Sinovas, FFI.

The IWT problem

Over the last century, Siamese crocodiles have been driven to the point of extinction by commercial hunting, primarily for the international skin trade as well as to stock crocodile farms. Although habitat degradation is now the main threat to the species, a low population in the wild means that any poaching is a serious concern. One factor contributing to illegal trade is the difficulty in monitoring crocodile farms in Cambodia to ensure that they do not purchase wild-caught individuals.

The community engagement approach

The Cambodian Crocodile Conservation Project was established by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in 2000 following the positive identification of the Siamese crocodile in the Cardamon Mountains. The project aims to restore the Siamese crocodile population and use the species as a flagship for conserving threatened rivers and wetlands across Cambodia. In close partnership with the Cambodian government

and Indigenous Khmer Dauem communities, FFI have developed crocodile sanctuaries protected by over 30 paid community wardens to safeguard the remaining wild crocodiles and their habitat. The wardens are tasked with raising awareness of the crocodiles and the local regulations in place to protect them, gathering information on the crocodiles including local perceptions, and reporting illegal activities to government authorities.

The Khmer Dauem have been living in the Cardamom Mountains for many years where they have traditionally protected the critically endangered Siamese crocodile. The project was developed through discussions with these communities on their issues, needs and wants, and focuses on three main strategies:

1. Improve food security and find alternative sources of protein by providing technical training on rice and chicken farming
2. Increase incomes by improving business acumen alongside strengthening market systems
3. Build capacity of community wardens to monitor and protect the environment

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- 31 paid community wardens, with bonuses when crocodile nests are found
- Awareness raising and education around wildlife and protected area legislation
- Promoting traditional values towards nature which includes protecting the Siamese crocodile

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Support to improve rice and poultry production
- Technical and infrastructure support to produce and market lemongrass essential oils

Improving education and awareness

- Raising awareness of the importance of protecting Siamese crocodiles



Siamese crocodile hatchling. Credit: Jeremy Holden, FFI.

Impacts on IWT

Support to local crocodile wardens in community-managed sanctuaries continues to deliver ongoing protection in target areas, with zero incidents of poaching since 2011. Monitoring data shows that populations are stable or increasing in these sites. The protection of these areas has had a further impact on the aquatic diversity of the sanctuaries, including on otters, fish and turtle species.

In 2021, the Chhay Reap Community Crocodile Wardens were among the winners of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas International Ranger Award, recognised for their work to prevent poaching of the species, protect vital habitats, monitor the crocodiles and safeguard their cultural heritage.



Releasing Siamese crocodile into the wild.
Credit: Jeremy Holden, FFI.

Lessons learned

Pay attention to challenges related to political instability, corruption or militarised conservation

Economic development is often a key priority, particularly in poorer countries, and unsustainable 'shortcuts' to achieve it are commonplace. Checks and balances can be inadequate or absent especially where corruption and nepotism are rampant (eg in Cambodia). In this context, local conservation interventions can be effective as long as they do not affect economic gains. At the government level, this means development planning can very quickly undo years of good conservation work. This is happening in Cambodia through the ongoing reallocation of protected land to private interests, which is already seriously affecting important landscapes including the Cardamom Mountains.

Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

At the local community level, increasing benefits and reducing costs from wildlife is key. In the case of Siamese crocodiles in Cambodia, costs are relatively low (eg no HWC and no major resource use restrictions). However, benefits are also limited, as aside from support provided by the project plus cultural benefits (which are being eroded by an influx of outsiders into local communities), there is little ecotourism potential in these areas.

Develop long-term relationships to build trust

An important factor contributing to the success of this project has been its long-term vision and implementation, with engagement of local communities a central part. This has resulted in trusting relationships between different stakeholders including local communities, FFI and the Forestry Administration, serving as the basis for community members to take ownership of project activities.

Contact

Pablo Sinovas, Country Manager, Cambodia, Fauna & Flora International

Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/cambodian-crocodile-conservation-project>

Community-led Patrols in the Prey Lang Forest, Cambodia

Prey Lang Community Network

SPECIES AFFECTED	Siamese rosewood (<i>Dalbergia cochinchinensis</i>) and other threatened timber species
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Timber
COUNTRY	Cambodia
LOCATION	The Prey Lang forest covers roughly 5000 km ² in the central plains of Cambodia, west of the Mekong river. Prey Lang is home to the Indigenous Kuy, who are culturally and spiritually linked to their ancestral forests.
TIMEFRAME	2001-present



PLCN patrol confiscated timber Credit: Ida Theilade.

The IWT problem

Cambodia has the world's highest deforestation rate,⁵ with extensive illegal logging carried out by logging cartels in collusion with government authorities. High

value timber, such as Siamese rosewood, is illegally exported to Vietnam and China, often issued with fake customs papers.⁶

⁵ <https://research.wri.org/gfr/latest-analysis-deforestation-trends>

⁶ GI-TOC, 2021

The community-engagement approach

People who live in or near Prey Lang Forest have traditionally patrolled the forest to protect its resources. In 2001, witnessing increasing deforestation for the illegal timber trade, community members self-organised to form the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN). Members of PLCN act independently, designing their own monitoring scheme and carrying out all information gathering and reporting.

PLCN undertake patrols to document illegal logging and poaching, confiscate equipment and report incidents to authorities. Patrol members volunteer their time and use their own motorbikes. They receive no external incentives and have no formal enforcement power. When loggers are caught red-handed, PLCN engage them in peaceful dialogue, informing the loggers about the destructive effects of their behaviour on local livelihoods.

Since 2005, PLCN has collected data on illegal logging, biodiversity, and climate change using a smartphone app. To date, PLCN has up-loaded more than 30,000 observations using the app. Data collected on the app is published in reports, as well as communicated to policy makers and the general public using news outlets and social media.⁷

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- All members of the PLCN are volunteers whose aim is to stop illegal logging and enforce the forest law
- Strengthening and supporting traditional norms and sanctions against IWT

Impacts

A study showed that active members of PLCN consider themselves successful in stopping illegal activities they encounter.⁸ However, in February 2020, the Cambodian authorities banned environmental defenders from entering the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary and PLCN have been barred from conducting their forest patrols ever since. Satellite images showed an immediate increase in illegal logging coinciding with this ban on local forest patrols. The Ministry of Environment, including rangers funded by international donor agencies, are known to collude with illegal logging cartels. Yet, the PLCN continues their work to

document illegal logging and protect the forest at great personal risk.

Lessons learned

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

IPLCs are effective in monitoring and protecting forests and their efforts should be supported to a greater extent.

Pay attention to challenges related to political instability, corruption or militarised conservation

Authoritarian regimes, corruption, militarisation of protected areas and incrimination of environmental defenders is a major challenge to Indigenous and community-led conservation initiatives.



PLCN member with confiscated chain saw.

Credit: Ida Theilade.

Contact

Ida Theilade, Professor, University of Copenhagen

Dimitris Argyriou, Project Coordinator, PLCN

Find out more

www.preylang.net and <https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/prey-lang-community-network>

⁷ Brofeldt et al., 2008

⁸ Turreira-Garcia et al., 2018

Saving Sumatran Tigers

Fauna & Flora International and Kerinci Seblat National Park

SPECIES AFFECTED	Sumatran tiger (<i>Panthera tigris sumatrae</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Skin, bones and teeth
COUNTRY	Indonesia
LOCATION	The 13,800 km ² Kerinci Seblat National Park spans the Indonesian provinces of West Sumatra, Jambi, Bengkulu and South Sumatra.
TIMEFRAME	2000-present



Tiger Protection and Conservation Unit personnel on a patrol at Ipuh River.
Credit: Kerinci Seblat National Park and Fauna & Flora International.

The IWT problem

One of the main threats to Sumatran tigers is poaching for IWT, driven by high demand for their skin, bones and canines across south-east Asia. Between 2013 – 2015 a major spike in poaching threat was recorded in Kerinci Seblat National Park (KSNP), driven by organised wildlife crime syndicates. However, following targeted, intelligence-led law enforcement, this threat has now declined, paving the way for recovery.

The community engagement approach

In 2000, to protect tigers and their principal prey, the KSNP authority and FFI established two tiger protection and conservation units in the park. By 2013 the number of patrol teams increased to six, with each unit composed of three rangers drawn from forest-edge communities and led by a national park ranger.

Overall, more than 500 national park and community forest rangers have been trained to conduct anti-poaching forest patrols, remove snares and deter would-be poachers, and conduct human-tiger conflict mitigation.

The rangers are helped by a carefully cultivated network of local informants, who play a key role in supporting undercover investigations to identify tiger poachers and traders and warn of suspected active snares or potential wildlife conflict. Informants typically live in villages close to the forest edge and contact rangers when they either see or hear of a suspicious person entering the forest. There are more than 30 'open' informants, comprising rangers extended family and social networks, and many more 'closed' informants, with whom the project staff are friendly but have not revealed their identity.

To address local concerns and prevent retaliatory killing of real or perceived problem tigers, FFI also aims to rapidly respond to human-tiger conflict, ideally before any livestock predation has occurred.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Six tiger protection and conservation units, each composed of three rangers from forest-edge communities
- 500 national park and community forest rangers trained
- Informants who advise of a suspicious person entering the forest may receive a small reward for their information, typically mobile phone credit if the information is validated

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Prioritising rapid responses to even very minor human-tiger conflicts and resolving conflicts collaboratively, drawing on local wisdom and knowledge where appropriate



Members of the three Kerinci Seblat Tiger Protection and Conservation Units based in Bengkulu. Credit: Kerinci Seblat National Park and Fauna & Flora International.

Impacts

Patrol data shows that where there are relatively frequent ranger patrols, fewer snares are found. Also, patrols responding to 'tip-offs' from local informants are significantly more likely to detect snares (by more than 40%) than routine patrols.

Between 2012 and 2015, after years of declining threat, tigers in Kerinci Seblat were the focus of a surge in IWT-driven poaching. Partners responded by strengthening information networks to support patrol deployment, while working to identify the poachers and traders driving the threat and to support law enforcement.

Between January 2016 and December 2017, 15 tiger poachers and traders were arrested, prosecuted and jailed, and this drove significant falls in poaching threat across the landscape as wildlife trade networks were disrupted. The results not only demonstrate the effectiveness of the Kerinci Seblat law enforcement strategy in protecting wildlife but highlight the benefits from cultivating a network of reliable informants.

Lessons learned

Better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT

Many of the best results in reducing threats to tigers and other wildlife are developed over a period of years. Whilst tiger law enforcement actions grab the headlines, the real successes have been steady, gradual declines in snare poaching threats, which take time and long-term funding to achieve.

It is often difficult to secure funding support for local partners who may be the best placed to pioneer new approaches. For instance, where they are drawing on specific local cultural or religious norms which may have the potential to be trialled more widely, whilst being adapted to locally relevant norms.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

This project was designed collaboratively, drawing on local priorities and local knowledge. In Indonesia there is a saying '*each pond has different fish, each paddock has different grasshoppers*'. This is a good approach, and it works. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in wildlife conservation, including actions to address and reduce IWT, even though one overarching goal or purpose is sought.

Respect existing community structures and norms and build on them wherever possible

This project worked with tiger shaman to promote tiger conservation awareness in an area where the species have a hugely important role in local customary beliefs. This worked well and proved popular with local government who saw traditional beliefs being used to leverage conservation values. More recently, a key programme partner has worked with local religious leaders in two districts to socialise a national level *fatwa* against poaching or trading endangered species, in particular the Sumatran tiger. The importance of nature conservation in Islam and the duty of the Faithful to conserve wildlife has been promoted in local mosques and won wide public and local government support.

Contact

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Laure Joanny, Technical Specialist, Wildlife Trade, Fauna & Flora International

Iswadi, Director, Lingkar Inisiatif

Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/safeguarding-sumatran-tigers-kerinci-seblat-national-park>

Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trafficking through a Community-based Conservation Approach in West Kalimantan

Planet Indonesia

SPECIES AFFECTED	Sunda Bearded Pig (<i>Sus barbatus</i>), Helmeted Hornbill (<i>Rhinoplax vigil</i>), Straw-headed Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>), Sunda Pangolin (<i>Manis javanica</i>), Abbott's Gibbons (<i>Hylobates abbotti</i>), White-bearded Gibbons (<i>Hylobates albibarbis</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Casques, scales, live animals, meat
COUNTRY	Indonesia
LOCATION	Two terrestrial sites in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. The first is in the 180,000 ha Gunung Nyiut Penrissen Forest Complex that includes the 91,759 ha Gunung Nyiut Nature Reserve and 60,815 ha of 'protection' forests. The other site is located in the 229,000 ha Gunung Naning 'protection' forests nestled within the 2 million ha Arabella-Schwanner landscape.
TIMEFRAME	2014-present



Woman in Gunung Nyiut harvesting Cakra chili peppers as part of the sustainable agroforestry programme. Credit: Planet Indonesia.

The IWT problem

The project is based in two sites in West Kalimantan, Gunung Nyiut and Gunung Naning, where poachers predominantly include local villagers, who may be

either opportunistic or professional hunters. Non-local intermediaries take advantage of the poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities to entice these villagers to poach for IWT in return for relatively high sums of money.

The community engagement approach

At their two terrestrial project sites, Planet Indonesia have implemented a Conservation Cooperative (CC) approach that aims to alleviate socio-economic inequalities that may drive people to engage in poaching. The CC approach begins with a commitment to the community by Planet Indonesia to ensure they are actively involved in the decision-making and strategic planning and evaluation of their local environment. Once established, a CC provides the governance structure to serve as a community-led management authority capable of engaging all community members on the management of surrounding natural resources. The CC approach also facilitates access to much needed non-financial and financial services for vulnerable rural communities living across West Kalimantan's protected areas.

Programmes are designed to empower communities to shift away from IWT. They include establishing community-led deterrents to IWT by involving communities in monitoring and enforcing both national and customary rules related to forests and wildlife. These community-led patrols consist of one government park ranger, three or four villagers, and one Planet Indonesia field staff. Planet Indonesia also support the development of village-led savings and loans programmes, which provide access to equitable financial capacity to strengthen resilience and livelihoods. This includes identifying income-generating commodities, providing asset-based inputs such as fertiliser, and providing training in leadership and financial literacy.

High costs of healthcare can leave communities dependent on poaching, so non-financial incentives to reduce this dependency include access to basic healthcare services and information. Planet Indonesia's healthy family programme engages and trains local women as health ambassadors to extend access and distribute basic healthcare and family planning materials within rural communities.



Community patrol members. Credit: Planet Indonesia.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Community patrol members are paid a per-diem that also includes expenses related to food and refreshments, as well as being provided with uniforms and equipment
- Capacity-building training is provided for community patrol members to create awareness within their communities about Indonesian laws related to forests and wildlife
- Community patrol members play a crucial role in supporting village governments to enforce customary rules related to the use of forest products and wildlife

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Economic incentives are generated by the village savings and loans programme
- Social incentives are generated by the healthy family programme

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Villagers are supported to diversify their livelihoods with training on financial literacy and business development
- Sustainable agriculture and agroforestry programme

Improving education and awareness

- Awareness raising sessions related to poaching sanctions, protected area legislation and national laws related to wildlife trade

Impacts

To date, patrols in both Gunung Nyuit and Gunung Naning have removed 3,402 snares. Analysis of patrol data between 2018–2022 in the Gunung Nyuit site showed a steep decline of 87% in hunting incidents, encroachment and logging within areas patrolled. Similarly encouraging results are seen in Gunung Naning, with data from 2020–2022 showing a decline of 58% in destructive practices in the forest. Patrol data, alongside social surveys of local exports, shows that wildlife encounter rates have also increased.

A 2-year impact evaluation carried out by Planet Indonesia showed that deforestation rates in primary rainforest dropped by 56% in the surrounding areas of the project in comparison to years prior to programme implementation. By comparing before and after results

between control and impact sites, results show that over the past three years, 77% of the tree cover loss took place outside of programme partnership areas.

Since 2019, three of the villages have used the CC model to revitalise the traditional Dayak customary law (hukum adat) to prohibit excessive logging in priority zones, as well as the hunting of certain species near the reserve, including the critically endangered Helmeted Hornbill.

Additionally, in Planet Indonesia's work to reduce the drivers of IWT and natural resource exploitation, in Gunung Nyuit more than 799 farmers (41% of whom are women) have received training on organic and sustainable farming practices and reported an 81% reduction in their production cost and an increase in yield by 234%.

In an effort to improve community health and reduce reliance on exploitative activities to meet healthcare costs, 410 households have received access to basic health services, information and family planning from 93 trained community female health ambassadors.

In terms of economic impact, the community-led savings and loans programme grew by 32% in Gunung Nyuit and 44% in Gunung Naning between 2021 and 2022 with total savings reaching IDR 849,380,874 or approximately GBP 46,870. Money is accrued in the fund as each borrower returns a small amount of their profit (1–5%) to the community managed savings and loans programme, building economic resilience for rural villages in times of need. In 2021 these funds were used to support 78 new sustainable businesses such as ginger cultivation and poultry trading.

Lessons learned

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

Planet Indonesia's core model is to increase the focus on improving capacity for sustainable participatory natural resources management, given local communities are best positioned – and possess the motivation – to govern their surrounding landscapes and its resources in an equitable and regenerative way.

Develop long-term relationships to build trust

The foundation of successful community-led conservation is trust underpinned by positive relationships. At Planet Indonesia, field staff, often from the communities they work with, develop strong relationships in the villages they partner with. The investment of having frequent and long-term connections with community members is a necessary one and is often the driving force behind desired behaviour change. In 2015, Planet Indonesia saw a 95% reduction in poaching incidents, finding upon social examination that most poachers had developed positive relationships with field staff members and were much more receptive to conservation and behaviour change messaging than before. Unfortunately, the distrust many rural communities feel due to years of false promises and dismissal of their needs, aspirations and involvement in processes can inhibit their engagement in future community-centred development and conservation projects. Organisations must prioritise building relationships and forming trust with community members to resolve conflicts and drive positive impacts for wildlife.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

Planet Indonesia's observational and listening based lens seeks to understand community needs prior to forming preconceived judgements or ideas. The act of observing is critical to ensuring place-based approaches can flourish as organisations steer clear of copy-paste replicas. Attentive listening draws and builds upon the needs and preferences indicated by community partners.

Contact

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/reducing-illegal-wildlife-trafficking-through-community-based-conservation-approach-west-kalimantan>

Project on the Keys to Understanding Orangutan Killing (POKOK)

Brunel University London

SPECIES AFFECTED	Bornean Orangutan (<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Live animals, body parts
COUNTRY	Indonesia
LOCATION	Research for this initiative is being carried out in West and Central Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, with rural communities who live in and around the forest habitats of the critically endangered Bornean Orangutan
TIMEFRAME	2017–2022



Borneo landscape. Credit: Liana Chua.

The IWT problem

Research in rural West Kalimantan suggests that while local communities do get involved in IWT networks as sellers and middlemen, their involvement is usually patchy and opportunistic, and often the result of HWC. Importantly, the POKOK initiative found that communities' responses (or lack thereof) to anti-IWT

and other conservation interventions were shaped as much by their views of conservation itself as by the content of such interventions. This points to a need for conservation and conservationists to take stock of how their work fits into broader socio-economic and political circumstances, and how they need to adapt to those circumstances rather than only seeking to change local people's mindsets.

The community engagement approach

POKOK (*Project on the keys to understanding orangutan killing or Pola kematian orangutan dan konflik manusia*) is an anthropology-conservation initiative that aims to mitigate orangutan killing and improve human-orangutan coexistence in rural Borneo. Part of the research aims to understand the nature of local people's involvement in poaching networks.

The initiative seeks to build up an in-depth, nuanced understanding of the lives of some of the rural communities who live in and around orangutan habitat. These include Indigenous Dayaks, Melayu, and migrants from elsewhere in Indonesia. This research focuses mainly on Dayak communities. It also seeks to understand their experiences and concerns in relation to other players, such as local and national government, ecotourism initiatives, and conservationists. POKOK draws on this ground-level research to develop tools and strategies to help conservation scientists and practitioners working in the region establish more ethical and contextually-informed relationships with local communities.



Baby orangutan. Credit: Paul Thung.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Raising community awareness about wildlife crime penalties and sanctions

Improving relations between conservation organisations and local communities

- Giving methodological guidance to conservation workers on how to do social research and engagement
- Providing conservation workers with empirical insights into the perspectives and priorities of local communities
- Helping local communities make sense of conservation initiatives

Improving education and awareness

- Working with conservation organisations, scientists and practitioners to devise more contextually appropriate forms of education and awareness raising

Impacts

POKOK aims to use its research and outputs to develop new, contextually grounded, approaches to human-wildlife coexistence and local engagement. To this end, it has produced several tools and resources for conservationists working in the region. These include a series of blog posts⁹ on research findings, which includes reflections on conservation messaging about COVID-19, arguments about how to take local concepts of poverty into account when designing community interventions, and methodological considerations when designing social surveys. POKOK also co-published a toolkit¹⁰ for conservationists on “Using Ethnographic Research for Social Engagement”, which draws on issues and concerns that emerged during its research. The toolkit offers an introduction to key social concerns in conservation, an overview of the principles of ethnographic research, a guide to some of its key methods and approaches (illustrated with case studies), and tips on analysing and reporting ethnographic findings. Hard copies have been distributed to conservation organisations in the UK and Indonesia, and a pdf can be freely accessed on-line in English¹¹ and Indonesian.¹² In addition, scientific outputs

⁹ <https://pokokborneo.wordpress.com/blog/>

¹⁰ <https://pokokborneo.wordpress.com/2022/03/22/introducing-our-new-toolkit-using-ethnographic-research-for-social-engagement-a-toolkit-for-orangutan-and-other-conservationists/>

¹¹ <https://globallivesoftheorangutan.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/OrangutanReport-WEB-1.pdf>

¹² <https://globallivesoftheorangutan.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Orangutan-TRANS-WEB-1.pdf>

include an interdisciplinary article co-authored by 14 social and conservation scientists that reimagines the conservation-social science relationship through the lens of orangutan conservation.¹³

These outputs are contributing to a broader, incremental shift within orangutan conservation strategy towards more contextually-grounded, less punitive engagements with rural communities, without whose support efforts to tackle IWT cannot succeed.



A group of boys works together by the river to clean and cut up the game they shot in the vicinity of their village. Credit: Paul Thung.

Lessons learned

Better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT

This research reveals how the lack of long-term funding can be a major stumbling block for conservationists seeking to establish a long-term presence and build up trust in specific areas. This is partly due to the dominance of a 'crisis' model of conservation that prioritises quick, quantifiable interventions over long-term, cumulative relation-

building. However, this research suggests that it is precisely this gradual process of building personal relations and trust that gives conservation organisations more insight into developments on the ground and makes local communities more willing to cooperate with them when the need arises, eg when deciding what to do with a baby orangutan that has been captured as a result of HWC. Here, funding bodies can play a crucial role in reframing their assessment criteria and making new opportunities available for more long-term social engagement.

Develop long-term relationships to build trust

Research shows that messages about the cost of wildlife crime stick better when backed up by long-term, trusting relationships. Conservation workers who are bound by pre-determined project aims and timelines often struggle to get sufficient institutional support to establish and maintain these relationships. Where conservation organisations or individual workers tend to stay for a short time and often get replaced by new organisations or workers, continuity and trust are compromised.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

IWT prevention initiatives are often hampered by the use of fixed templates. These are easier to communicate to supporting institutions such as financial donors and national governments, but are often ill-suited to the local context. This research suggests, for example, that many local communities in Kalimantan have limited interest in orangutans, who to them are just one of many forest species. Prioritising orangutans too much in interventions and communications, can therefore increase local perceptions that conservationists care more about orangutans than about people, and thus hamper effective community engagement. To reduce IWT, it can be more effective to find out about the interests and priorities of the community and start with addressing those as a way of establishing good relations.

Contact

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/pokok-using-anthropology-mitigate-orangutan-killing-and-human-orangutan-conflict-borneo>

¹³ <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pan3.10072>

South America

Sustainable Use of Crocodiles

Association for the Conservation of the American Crocodile in Cispatá Bay (ASOCAIMAN)

SPECIES AFFECTED	American crocodile (<i>Crocodylus acutus</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Skins
COUNTRY	Colombia
LOCATION	San Antero is a village in the Bay of Cispatá where the community is very poor and reliant on the natural resources provided by the mangrove ecosystem for their livelihood.
TIMEFRAME	2003-present



ASOCAIMAN members closely monitor crocodiles. Credit: ASOCAIMAN.

The IWT problem

Heavy trade in skins in the early 1900s led to major declines in the American crocodile, which was almost eliminated from its natural habitat in most parts of Colombia. Populations became restricted to small, isolated pockets, such as within the mangroves of the Bay of Cispatá. To protect the species, the American crocodile was included on Appendix I of

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), thus preventing commercial trade, and at the same time the government of Colombia also banned hunting of the species. Whilst these measures were intended to help conserve the American crocodile, they were counterproductive because local people lost any incentive to protect the mangroves that the crocodiles inhabit.

The community engagement approach

In 2003, as part of a wider management plan for the area's mangroves, a group of 18 ex-hunters became active participants in a programme to manage the American crocodile, involving research, monitoring and environmental education activities directed towards the recovery and conservation of the species.

In 2006 this group of ex-hunters formed the Association for the Conservation of the American Crocodile in Cispatá Bay (ASOCAIMAN), a legal association to consolidate, build and sustain the crocodile management programme. The aim of ASOCAIMAN is to meet the development needs of the local population by building their capacity to manage and benefit from wildlife.



American crocodiles are released into the wild.
Credit: ASOCAIMAN.

The project began with a training programme for former crocodile hunters to become skilled managers of the species, and this soon expanded to include ecotourism training. The conservation strategy of the species is based on scientific research, education and traditional knowledge and includes monitoring of wildlife populations, habitat management, and egg harvesting to raise hatchlings.

In recognition of improvements to the conservation status of the species, in 2016 at the 17th CITES CoP, the American crocodile population of the Bay of Cispatá was moved to CITES Appendix II. Also, in December 2018, the Environmental Ministry of Colombia lifted the ban on trade of the species at Cispatá Bay. Although this currently limits permits to crocodiles hatched from harvested and incubated eggs, it will allow communities to sell skins once the crocodiles have been raised to a certain size.

The community engagement strategy

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Harvesting and incubating eggs, and raising crocodiles for their skins
- Community members receive payment for participating in scientific research and monitoring activities
- Ecotourism

Impacts

The conservation and monitoring actions implemented by ASOCAIMAN members have led to the recovery of the Bay's population of the crocodile, with an almost 200% increase over a 10-year period. Former crocodile hunters are now strong advocates for the conservation and sustainable use of the species and no longer engage in poaching. The initiative is owned by local people and has improved their livelihoods through income from tourism activities, which are centred on the ex-hunters and the success they've achieved.

The promise of a sustainable crocodile skin industry has been key to maintaining enthusiasm and engagement of local people in the initiative, who understand that they will benefit once the crocodiles have reached a size where their skins can be sold to commercial buyers. With support from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, ASOCAIMAN has been establishing the legal framework for the sustainable use industry as well as equipping local people with the skills they will need to effectively participate.

Lessons learned

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

The success of this project is entirely based on local people being able to benefit from the sustainable use of the American crocodile. This has led to a shift in attitude towards the species.

Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

Motivated by future benefits from legal trade in crocodile skins, communities involved in the project have spent many years educating other local people, as well as tourists who visit the area, about the importance of conserving the American crocodile. This has incentivised other communities in neighbouring regions to explore similar options.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

The project responded to the needs of local fishermen, community groups and ex-hunters of the American crocodile, who believed that ecological, social and economic benefits could all be generated if the species was sustainably managed.



Educating local people about the ASOCAIMAN initiative.
Credit: ASOCAIMAN.

Contact

Clara Lucia Sierra Diaz, Coordinator, Mangrove Conservation Project at Cispatá Bay

Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/crocodile-conservation-colombia-asocaiman>

Sustainable Wildlife Management Project in Guyana

A partnership between locally based organisations, the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission and the Center for International Forestry Research as part of the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme¹⁴

SPECIES AFFECTED	Tapir (<i>Tapirus</i>), Jaguar (<i>Panthera onca</i>), Armadillo species, Giant Anteater (<i>Myrmecophaga tridactyla</i>), Savanna Deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>), Arapaima (<i>Arapaima gigas</i>), Giant River Otter (<i>Pteronura brasiliensis</i>), Red Siskin (<i>Spinus cucullatus</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Wild meat, fish and live animals
COUNTRY	Guyana
LOCATION	The Rupununi region consists mostly of large tracts of primary forest, with about 20% of its land area covered by natural neotropical savannah and seasonally flooded wetlands. The region is home to approximately 24,000 inhabitants, where Indigenous groups maintain traditional lifestyles of subsistence hunting, fishing and farming.
TIMEFRAME	2018–2023



Savanna deer captured by a camera trap in the Rupununi savannah. Credit: SWM Guyana.

¹⁴ The Sustainable Wildlife Management programme is implemented in several countries through a consortium of partners including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). CIFOR is specifically in charge of developing the SWM Guyana project.

The IWT problem

Hunting and inland fishing were unregulated at the national level in Guyana when the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) project was first implemented in 2018.

Guyana is one of the largest exporters of wildlife for the pet and skin trade in South America. Fish species with a high commercial value, such as the arapaima, are illegally targeted for Brazilian markets. Jaguars and other wild cats are often killed in retaliation for livestock depredation, though there is also growing concern that demand for jaguar parts from China could be on the rise. Giant anteaters are sought for the illegal pet trade, as well as threatened by uncontrolled fires and road kills.

Some community members are involved as hunters or trappers, but commercial activities are led by external hunters and wildlife traders.

The community engagement approach

The SWM Guyana project is supporting locally driven initiatives that contribute to reduce IWT. The project acts in support of existing grassroots organisations in the Rupununi region with funding, network opportunities, organisational capacities and technical skills. Community representatives, as well as representatives of grassroots NGOs and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission and the Fisheries Department, act as active members of the site steering committee of the project. The committee's

role is to ensure that all activities contribute to a shared vision for wildlife and Indigenous livelihoods in the Rupununi, with communities participating in the development of work plans, in steering the project and in evaluation activities.

The approach of the project is based on community rights. Free, prior and informed consent and gender considerations are mainstreamed in all SWM activities.

Impacts

Impacts include strengthened local community organisations interested in wildlife management and conservation. These organisations have significantly increased their technical capacities and organisational skills, and local leaders have improved their leadership skills with respect to wildlife management issues.

Co-management agreements between communities and governmental institutions are currently being formalised to ensure that local knowledge and local capacities are recognised in planning and implementation, and that national agencies commit their support to local community efforts to manage wildlife sustainably.

Lessons learned

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

Land tenure and the recognition of traditional rights over wildlife are a pre-requisite for sustainable wildlife management led by communities. In Guyana, traditional rights are recognised by the Amerindian People's Act, however, these rights do not currently apply for communities without a land title or for

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Monitoring wildlife populations in key and culturally important sites, as well as IWT incidents

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Strengthening the role of village councils in wildlife management
- Promoting local knowledge and the incorporation of scientific knowledge in wildlife management
- Developing sustainable economic activities in support of wildlife conservation and local livelihoods
- Wildlife friendly ecotourism
- Implementing a community-led fisheries management plan

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Developing culturally adapted measures to reduce HWC

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Developing markets for locally produced and environmentally friendly livestock

Improving education and awareness

- Implementing an environmental education curriculum to raise awareness
- Supporting education and awareness raising related to local knowledge and culture
- Supporting inter-community exchanges of lessons learnt at the landscape level

customary land that was not included in titled land. The land titling and title extension process in Guyana needs to be strengthened.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

The success of SWM in Guyana is due to communities being able to participate in all stages of the project – from planning, to implementation and evaluation. This provides ample opportunities to listen and incorporate recommendations made from the bottom-up and guarantees that communities fully adopt the project.

Establish multi-level partnerships that are driven by communities

Communities recognise their need to partner with national level organisations, civil society and the scientific community for successful community driven wildlife management. These partnerships are highly valued by communities, as the scientific knowledge from these partners helps to enrich their local knowledge. However, any co-management policies must specify that communities take a lead role in managing wildlife in their lands.

Respect existing community structures and norms and build on them wherever possible

In the inception phase, the SWM Guyana project identified existing local organisations to partner with in order to strengthen their technical and strategic planning capacities. The aim was to ensure that this increased capacity was available locally, thus providing sustainability of the programme beyond the project lifespan.

Contact

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/sustainable-wildlife-management-guyana>



Traditional meal with armadillo meat. Credit: Brent Stirton Getty image for FAO, CIRAD, WCS and CIFOR.

Caribbean Sharks Education Programme

Centro para la Investigación de Tiburones

SPECIES AFFECTED	Whale Shark (<i>Rhincodon typus</i>), Hammerhead shark (<i>Sphyrna lewini</i> and <i>S. mokarran</i>), Fox Shark (<i>Alopias supercilliosus</i>), Mako Shark (<i>Isurus Oxyrinchus</i>), Tiger Shark (<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Shark fins, jawbones, vertebrae, liver, meat, eyes
COUNTRY	Venezuela
LOCATION	Venezuelan coast, including the Archipiélago los Roques, San Esteban, La Restinga, Henry Pittier and Mochima
TIMEFRAME	2017-present



Ecotourism. Credit: CIT.

The IWT problem

Poaching is carried out by members of poor fishing communities, who accept highly attractive economic offers from international traders residing in Venezuela that are involved in the illegal shark trade.

The community engagement approach

Centro para la Investigación de Tiburones (CIT) have built long-term relationships with communities, allowing them to better understand the reasons why

local people engage in poaching. As the main driver is poverty, CIT's strategy consists of countering the offer of illegal with higher and more stable legal income, primarily through the development of ecotourism, which has been launched in areas where no such activities were previously available. As part of this, support has been provided to communities to propose and design plans and services adapted to local conditions, and for subsequent implementation and promotion of these plans at a national level. Further income has been generated by the sale of red lionfish to local tourist refectories and high-end restaurants in Caracas.



Fishermen collaborating. Credit: CIT.

Training workshops are run for fishing communities on the importance of ecosystem services and in particular the role played by sharks in marine environments. In addition, education and awareness-raising programmes are carried out in local schools, at workshops for fishermen's associations and through personal visits made to communal meeting places, unloading ports and even individual homes.

Compensation is sometimes paid to fishermen for nets ruined or damaged by whale sharks, which helps to encourage positive attitudes towards the species. The policy requires that fishermen keep photographic and audio-visual records, and this also helps to avoid the use of prohibited nets, which are not subject to compensation. In addition, workshops are held to teach fishermen and divers how to recover ghost nets, which are subsequently used to craft shopping bags to be sold in local markets. Plastic waste recycling technology is also applied to help build tourist facilities and to repair fishing boats.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Paid in money community scouts who are responsible for monitoring the potential illegal capture or killing of target shark species, particularly for commercial purposes. They are also responsible for education on the negative impacts of IWT
- Un-paid community scouts who work at a more local level
- Non-monetary, in-kind incentives for community intelligence, such as equipment to improve fishing boats, other useful materials, and food
- Raising community awareness about wildlife crime penalties and sanctions through education

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Support to help communities design and develop ecotourism activities, primarily based on whale shark watching
- Capture and sale of lionfish, an invasive species of the Caribbean, which has high commercial value due to demand for its meat

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Compensation for nets damaged by whale sharks

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Non-wildlife-based enterprise development, such as producing and selling shopping bags from recovered ghost nets

Improving education and awareness

- Education and awareness activities are carried out in the fishing communities, including talks, courses, workshops and other events. Community members are encouraged to share their experiences with each other as well as with external actors



Shark fin. Credit: CIT.

Impacts

During the last five years there has only been one documented case of a whale shark being illegal killed in Venezuela. The community involved in this case had not been engaged by the project and was linked to magic-religious beliefs. There have also been no reports of intentional mass catches of hammerhead and fox sharks.

There has been a noticeable change in local people's relationship with nature. This is particularly evident in school children and fishermen – particularly the latter who now generate revenue from whale shark ecotourism, benefitting many families along the coast. Illegal shark fin traders are no longer welcome in the area and as such their influence has been significantly reduced.

Lessons learned

Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

This has proven to be an effective incentive for collective participation in conservation. In this project, the killing of sharks for commercial purposes has steadily reduced due to the development of alternative sources of income that are related to the protection of the species.

Develop long-term relationships to build trust

Trusting relationships between external actors, such as researchers, divers and volunteers, and local communities, are best built when there has been long-term engagement. Over five years this project has strengthened trust between the team and local fishermen, who are now firmly committed to the conservation of sharks.

Contact

Leonardo Sánchez, Director, Centro para la Investigación de Tiburones

Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/caribbean-sharks-education-programme>



House to house. Credit: CIT.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Nashulai Maasai Conservancy

Nashulai Maasai Conservancy

SPECIES AFFECTED	Cheetah (<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>), Lion (<i>Panthera leo</i>), African Elephant (<i>Loxodonta africana</i>), Temminck's Ground Pangolin (<i>Smutsia temminckii</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Ivory, live animals, fur
COUNTRY	Kenya
LOCATION	Narok County, Maasai Mara, Kenya and surrounding areas of Maasailand.
TIMEFRAME	2016-present



Wildlife at Nashulai. Credit: Nashulai Maasai Conservancy.

The IWT problem

Before Nashulai Maasai Conservancy was established in 2016, poaching for IWT was widespread and carried out by local communities as well as outsiders. Poverty was the main driver and those involved tended to be 'conservation refugees' – Maasai who were forced off their traditional lands to establish foreign-owned wildlife conservancies – who saw that wildlife was being prioritised over their needs and ancestral rights.

The community engagement approach

Facing poverty and biodiversity loss, alongside the threats of losing land to desertification or a foreign-owned conservancy, five Maasai villages rallied together to create Nashulai, the first Indigenous owned and run conservancy in the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem. This allowed the Maasai to stay on their land, protect their wildlife and ensure that conservation revenue goes directly to community members.

The main philosophy of Nashulai is that Indigenous people are supportive of conservation and will readily share their land with and protect its wildlife – as they have done traditionally – provided that conservation brings benefits and not costs. At Nashulai, these benefits include payment for land leases, revenue generated from tourism, and the employment of former poachers as scouts, who are provided with an opportunity to use their tracking skills for conservation.

Many of the conservation methods used at Nashulai are rooted in traditional Maasai culture, with decisions guided by a council of elders. Under the guidance of the council, Nashulai has enacted new laws banning poaching, logging for firewood, and the retaliatory killing and poisoning of predators and vultures for livestock killing. Maasai culture is based on mutual trust, meaning these laws are overwhelmingly followed. Also, because most poachers come from neighbouring communities (many of which have become part of the extended Nashulai family) they are known to Nashulai, which allows leaders to apply social and cultural pressure to support them to abandon the practice.

Impacts

Due to strong community support, poaching has significantly reduced across the conservancy to near zero. This, combined with the removal of 25km of fencing and the division of land use zones, has contributed to wildlife levels increasing by 70%. Nashulai's Maasai giraffe population is one of the largest in the eastern Mara and packs of cheetahs and African wild dogs take up temporary residence every few months. Notably, over 70 elephant births have occurred at Nashulai since 2018. Former poachers now make up 20% of the scout force, who have helped to restore the savannah and forest areas. In 2018, warden Joseph Kasaine Ole Kosikir was one of 50 winners of the African Ranger Award in recognition of his team's success.

Conservation is universally supported at Nashulai, with the conservancy bringing stability to its 3,000 members. So far 60% of households have applied for micro-loans to start enterprises and plan for their family's future, and children have better access to education, with 62 provided with scholarships. The Nashulai cultural training centre has trained hundreds of young people, from both inside and outside the community, in conservation management, scouting, and guiding, allowing them to gain higher paying jobs and take leadership roles in conservation.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Community scouts are paid, and are occasionally assisted by volunteers called the Nashulai warriors for wildlife protection
- Strengthening and supporting traditional Maasai norms and sanctions against IWT

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Establishment of the Nashulai Maasai Safari company and employment in tourism activities
- All landowners receive lease payments
- Creation of a sustainable grazing commons for pastoralists
- Establishment of the Nashulai cultural training centre, which provides youth with skills needed for conservation management, hospitality and guiding

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Protective fencing around community and kitchen gardens
- Lion-proof bomas

- Communal insurance system to compensate Nashulai residents who lose livestock to predators
- Land zoning to separate livestock and wildlife

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Two schools have been built and primary education provided to all residents of Nashulai
- Construction of a piping system to provide potable water to all Nashulai's villages
- Women have been provided with entrepreneurship training, as well as access to anti-female genital mutilation and anti-gender-based violence programmes
- Community Feeding Programme during Covid-19 lockdowns reaching 32,000 people and preventing a wave of poaching

Improving education and awareness

- Scouts provide guidance on the importance of conservation to the wider community
- Conservation modules based on Masaai culture are included at primary school



Nashulai warriors. Credit: Nashulai Maasai Conservancy.

Lessons learned

Better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT

One difficulty is that a significant proportion of conservation funding is either from charitable foundations or from government organisations based in Western and/or English-speaking countries. This means that Western owned and run conservancies have an advantage in capturing conservation funding (due to their English fluency and higher-level contacts in the conservation space) at the expense of IPLCs. Limited financial opportunities mean fewer resources, creating challenges to developing the donor reporting and relations systems required to access future funding, as this would compete with spending on immediate conservation needs. Also, most grant and donation opportunities provide short term funding that ends once the crises or project window is over. Without access to sustainable, long-term sources of funding, it is difficult to make plans beyond maintaining current conservation projects and covering operation costs.

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

Community buy-in has been vital to success. In keeping with Maasai tradition, all decisions made at Nashulai are debated openly during community meetings where all members are permitted to participate. Whilst decisions are ultimately made by a

council of elders, consulting with the entire community ensures concerns are addressed and that new projects and laws have strong support from the start.

Increase benefits and reduce costs from wildlife

Many Indigenous Peoples have been negatively impacted by the 'fortress conservation' model, where conservancies are viewed as wildlife only spaces that force people off their land to become 'conservation refugees'. These people often turn to poaching, as they feel that engaging in IWT is a way to regain some value from the land and wildlife they've lost. At Nashulai, no residents are displaced and all revenue from conservation goes directly to the community in the form of income, employment, and development projects. Success at Nashulai has led to neighbouring villages wishing to adopt the same model and even join the conservancy so they too can benefit from conservation.

Contact

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/nashulai-maasai-conservancy>

The Conservancy Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme

Save the Rhino Trust

SPECIES AFFECTED	Black Rhino (<i>Diceros bicornis</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Rhino horn
COUNTRY	Namibia
LOCATION	Communal land in the north-west Kunene region of Namibia, home to the Himba ethnic group.
TIMEFRAME	2011-present



Rhino Rangers on patrol. Credit: Conservancy Rhino Ranger Support Group.

The IWT problem

Between 1960–1995, large-scale poaching caused a 98% drop in the numbers of black rhino, leaving just 2,400 individuals left in the wild. During this time wildlife in Namibia was owned and managed by the state, meaning the only interaction wildlife officials had with local people from surrounding communities was arresting or interrogating them for poaching. Subsequently, many people from these communities were engaged in IWT.

Thanks to conservation efforts, the population has doubled since the 1990s, and Namibia now has the largest concentration of free-roaming black rhino in Africa. However, the species continues to be threatened by IWT due to high demand for rhino horn across parts of Asia.

The community engagement approach

In 2011, in response to escalating threats from poaching, community leaders in the Kunene region realised they could be more effective rhino custodians if they had better training and equipment to monitor the species. It was hoped this would also help to expand income-generating opportunities from emerging rhino tourism. These community leaders reached out to Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) to ask for help, demonstrating their commitment to protecting one of the last wild populations of black rhino. Supported by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, a small group of dedicated field conservationists and NGOs responded by forming a working group that sought to deliver targeted support to rhino custodians in the form of incentives including patrol leadership, transport, uniforms, equipment, training and performance-based bonus payments. A year later, the Conservancy Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme was implemented.

The approach taken is guided by the belief that stable rhino populations depend on local people refusing to tolerate poaching, and rhinos being more valuable alive than dead. To determine the best strategies to achieve the initiative's objectives, programme leaders met with local leaders to establish how best to harness the values of the community that would achieve positive outcomes for people and rhinos. Local game guards were also asked to identify any barriers that were limiting their ability to conduct dedicated rhino patrols. Understanding these local viewpoints and context resulted in the development and implementation of several incentive-based strategies for local communities to engage in rhino conservation.



Black Rhino. Credit: Conservancy Rhino Ranger Support Group.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- For each conservancy, there are between 18 to 60 fully employed and paid rhino rangers, with wages complemented by non-financial benefits such as uniforms, team building and training seminars
- Rhino rangers visit rural farmers on each patrol to raise awareness about wildlife crime, in addition to building trust and strengthening willingness to cooperate by sharing information

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Training in rhino tourism and the development of community-led rhino tourism activities
- At the start a logo and motto were developed which created a sense of unity, reinforced local ownership and generated momentum and pride around a clear cause

Improving education and awareness

- Training of rhino rangers and local people to provide local outreach and awareness raising activities in their communities

Impacts

This initiative is a leading example of how communities can effectively lead the protection of wildlife. The number of confirmed poaching incidents decreased by 90% between 2018–2022, compared with the previous five-year period (2013–2017), with only 4 rhinos lost in the past 4.5 years. During the same ten-year period, team field days have increased 13-fold and verified rhino sightings increased 6-fold. Moreover, for the past 3 years most of the patrol effort has been contributed by the conservancy rhino rangers instead of NGO or government staff. Local people's willingness to detect and report wildlife crime has also increased, for example in 2017 local farmers living within rhino conservancies helped to foil potential poaching attempts on several occasions.

New sources of local income have been successfully generated and after just two years rhino rangers were leading their own tourism activities on behalf of their conservancies. This generated over \$250,000 in annual net income for communities living on conservancy lands in 2017 and over US\$1 million since the programme began in 2012. Both financial and non-financial benefits that come with being a

rhino ranger have fostered enthusiasm and pride, as well as reinforcing a sense of ownership in the wider community.

Lessons learned

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

In the Kunene region the conservancies have always served as legitimate local institutions, allowing the programme to flourish while the government's Rhino Custodianship Programme also provided a valuable platform for collaborative engagement between stakeholders. While much of the direct management of rhinos remains with the government (such as dehorning) the conservancy rhino rangers quickly became assets to the community, not only protecting the rhinos but also creating new opportunities to generate substantial income from rhino tourism.

Listen to community needs and priorities and base approaches on the local context

SRT's contextual approach – which sought to first and foremost develop a deeper understanding of local value demands and barriers to implementation – helped ensure that the strategies pursued aligned with on-the-ground realities. This created synergies with partners and helped build trust and respect.

Establish multi-level partnerships that are driven by communities

SRT have adopted a servant leadership approach to working with conservancy partners – letting the local rangers lead in determining what's needed on the ground to maximise their involvement and performance. Most important has been the insistence that all problems be identified and debated at the ground level before any solutions can be put forward.

Contact

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/conservancy-rhino-ranger-incentive-program>

Strengthening the Capacity of Wildlife Management Areas in Tanzania for People and Wildlife

Honeyguide

SPECIES AFFECTED	African elephant (<i>Loxodonta africana</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Ivory
COUNTRY	Tanzania
LOCATION	Randilen Wildlife Management Area in Monduli district, Burunge Wildlife Management Area in Babati district, Makame Wildlife Management Area in Kiteto district, plus a canine unit based in Serengeti National Park. These four programme areas cover more than 5000 km ² in Northern Tanzania.
TIMEFRAME	2015-present



Wildebeest move across a WMA in Northern Tanzania. Credit: Honeyguide.

The IWT problem

Before 2015, poaching of elephants for ivory was widespread throughout Tanzania including in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that act as buffer zones, dispersal areas, and passage corridors for national parks. Similarly, during the same period, there were many retaliatory killings of wildlife, particularly elephants and lions as a result of HWC. Most of these

incidents involved local people who hoped to increase their income or reduce their wildlife-related economic losses. Currently, there is no elephant poaching or retaliatory killings in the WMAs where Honeyguide is operational, with the last incident reported in May 2015. This result is attributed to the successful engagement and capacity building of communities living in the WMAs.

The community engagement approach

The main objective of the Honeyguide approach is to develop successful examples of community WMAs that are financially robust, socially valued and ecologically viable. Within the protection programme, Honeyguide elevates community-led and strategic wildlife protection in the WMAs against illegal or unsustainable use. In Tanzania, communities can contribute their land towards the designation of a WMA, which should then be led by representatives from these member communities. Honeyguide works closely with these leadership teams to build capacity to manage protection within and around their land.

Key activities include developing protection strategies that are effective and cost-sensitive, training community members as village game scouts (VGS), providing protection teams with the necessary resources and equipment, developing and implementing HWC mitigation strategies, and developing standard operating procedures.

Honeyguide leads strategic implementation, providing tools, coaching and equipment. During the first few years of operations, they also provide funding support until the WMAs and communities are able and can

afford operational expenses. Honeyguide also develops professional management systems in the WMAs so that all operations are locally managed beyond their support. The WMAs and community partners lead all operations on the ground using their employed staff and local VGS.

Impacts

There have been zero elephants killed for ivory or in retaliation to HWC in all WMAs that Honeyguide works since 2015, as well as a consistent decrease in bushmeat poaching. The community-based anti-IWT model of the programme has had a significant impact on wildlife in the WMAs. For example, aerial surveys and recent research reports¹⁵ show a significant increase in wildlife in Randilen WMA over the last 5–10 years. Almost 100% of poaching arrests are now reported by community informants rather than detected during patrols. This has reduced protection operating costs by over 80% when compared to conventional surveillance patrol methods in the WMAs.

The crop protection toolkit has reduced crop damages by elephants from 70% in 2014 to less than 10% in Burunge and Randilen WMAs. Currently, there are over 800 village crop protection team volunteers in all Honeyguide project areas.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- VGS are paid monthly salaries, receive rewards for arrests and seizures and are given bonuses according to protection efforts
- Community informants are incentivised to provide information that leads to arrests

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- Communities receive a percentage of revenue from photographic tourism and trophy hunting
- Communities secure their livelihoods from a dry season grazing area for their livestock

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Honeyguide developed a toolkit to deter wildlife from destroying crops and predated livestock, which is designed to disturb and chase away wildlife without harming them. The toolkit is being used by community volunteers to protect their own crops. VGS act as back up in a few incidents when the toolkit fails

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Revenue generated from tourism is directed towards the development of community infrastructure. As part of this Honeyguide is supporting the WMAs to create community investment funds to formalise the process of directing revenue to development projects

Improving education and awareness

- Honeyguide helps WMA develop communication strategies with their stakeholders, primarily using films to improve awareness and communications with member communities of the importance of conservation, WMA goals and impacts

¹⁵ Kiffner et al., 2022



Manyara Ranch K9 unit on a patrol. Credit: Honeyguide.

Local attitudes towards wildlife and conservation have improved in areas where Honeyguide works. In Randilen, a recent study¹⁶ reported that 75% of the population had positive attitudes toward the WMA, which is a significant shift from when the WMA was established in 2014.

Lessons learned

Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

Instead of overspending on expensive anti-poaching initiatives, invest a fraction in social services valued by communities to build a good relationship between a protected area and the people around it. They will become the eyes and ears of wildlife protection, hence reducing the need for expensive operations. If we develop robust local governance and management, and focus on community awareness and HWC mitigation, it becomes easier to achieve protection results and lowers operating costs. For example, when rangers respond to HWC incidents with vehicle backup services, they exchange contacts and create trust between themselves and the farmers. This trust poses a very high risk to poachers and deters them from entering the WMA due to the likelihood the community

will inform on them and call the rangers. It is also important to note that the benefits of conservation are not just financial, other benefits valued by people include securing land rights and providing grazing reserves in the dry season.

Recognise community rights to make decisions about, and benefit from, wildlife

For any organisation or business to become effective, they need a capable management team. If the local management team does not have effective leadership or good governance, or when decision-making rights are removed from them, their efforts are less effective.

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Find out more

<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/strengthening-capacity-wildlife-management-areas-increase-wildlife-protection-northern-tanzania>

¹⁶ Raycraft, 2022

Increasing Capacity for Anti-Poaching and Enhancing Human-Elephant Coexistence

Southern Tanzania Elephant Program

SPECIES AFFECTED	Abbott's duiker (<i>Cephalophus spadix</i>), African Elephant (<i>Loxodonta africana</i>), Bushbuck (<i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus</i>), Common duiker (<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>), Dik-dik (<i>Madoqua</i>), Greater kudu (<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>)
PRODUCTS IN TRADE	Ivory
COUNTRY	Tanzania
LOCATION	The project takes place in and around the Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi Game Reserve, part of the larger Ruaha-Rungwa ecosystem in southern Tanzania.
TIMEFRAME	2018-present



Spectators at the Tembo Cup. Credit: Hassan Kisamo.

The IWT problem

Villagers around the protected areas are involved directly and indirectly in poaching. People living close to the Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi Game Reserve (RKM GR) illegally collect meat, honey, timber and/or fish to sustain their daily needs.

Extensive ground experience has shown that there is sometimes collusion with poachers from other regions, especially where ivory is involved. Limited agricultural and employment opportunities in villages around RKM GR presents poaching as a source of income for pastoralists and farmers, who may be involved as trackers, skimmers or couriers of ivory.

The community engagement approach

A primary strategy of this project, led by the Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP), is to enhance anti-poaching capacity by supporting rangers with data optimisation and training. This includes improving the coverage of ground and air patrols, enhancing data collection for quality reporting and decision making, training in data analysis, and expanding the ability of rangers and scouts to enforce laws related to IWT. The overall aim is for these improvements to lead to increased human-elephant coexistence in the ecosystem. STEP provides similar support to the

Village Game Scouts (VGS) that protect MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area on the south-eastern boundary of Ruaha National Park.

STEP have also implemented activities to reduce risks associated with living with elephants, with the aim of improving the level of tolerance towards the species. This initially included installing beehive fences to protect crops but has shifted towards more general beekeeping activities to diversify household economies with honey production. The communities around RKM GR are dynamic, characterised by agropastoralism. Farms are large and scattered, often cut out of forested areas. This means the human-elephant interface is considerable, making farm-based mitigation methods a challenge. As a result, STEP have shifted towards more flexible beekeeping interventions and established other activities focused on building economic resilience, including village savings and loan associations (VSLAs). In addition, both large scale awareness raising events and one-on-one education aim to educate communities about elephant behaviour and how to stay safe around them.

Programmes are designed based on free prior and informed consent, with ground and household surveys conducted to inform the design of interventions. Throughout this project, STEP has engaged with all community members equally, regardless of sex, age and ethnicity.

Impacts

Aerial surveillance has proven to be an effective method of detecting and deterring poachers, especially in protected areas with poor road networks in wet seasons. In 2021, STEP's aerial patrols detected 13 poacher camps and 18 timber cutting sites, resulting in two arrests.

Through close monitoring of elephant movement in the community, 84 crop damage incidences were recorded in 2019, a 30% decline relative to 2017. This trend continued in 2021, with 15 incidents recorded and in 2021, with 16 incidents in the two primary areas of data collection. For food store damage, only five incidents were recorded in 2019, compared to 12 incidents in 2018. If it's assumed that crop damage is a driver of low levels of tolerance to wildlife, this could suggest a subsequent improvement of tolerance among members of the communities living with elephants. Monitoring of elephant responses to the original beehive fence (and a replacement fence which was a simple wire connecting posts) suggests they had an effect as a physical barrier, even though beehive occupancy never exceeded 11%. However, it is likely that other reasons contributed to the decrease in elephant crop damage, including efforts to restore local elephant corridors and increased availability of water in the game reserves due to abnormal rainfall, though it is difficult to confidently attribute causality to any of these factors.

The community engagement strategy

Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour

- Raising community awareness about wildlife crime penalties and sanctions through education and outreach events

Increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship

- STEP endeavours to help community members understand the contribution of wildlife to their livelihoods. This includes improving understanding of employment opportunities in conservation projects and revenue contributed from photographic or hunting tourism companies

Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife

- Trialling beehive fences to reduce crop raiding
- Enrolled residents as local elephant monitors to track elephant movement within community land
- Increasing economic resilience to human-elephant conflict through VSLAs

- Facilitating education and awareness raising on how to stay safe around elephants

Increasing livelihoods that are not related to wildlife

- Non-wildlife based enterprise development and support through access to financial services through VSLAs. Access to credit during periods of acute economic need (land preparation for agriculture) can reduce the reliance on other quick sources of income
- Supporting beekeeping activities to diversify livelihoods by producing honey

Improving education and awareness

- Facilitating large education and awareness-raising campaigns, such as football tournaments and film nights

Between 2019 and 2021, more than 170 farmers accessed loans (144 loans were issued in 2021 alone) that supported business establishment, agricultural activities, tuition fees, medication, and house improvement. While it was initially thought the end of cycle “share out” of profits earned from interest on loans was the primary benefit of VSLAs, extensive monitoring and evaluation has revealed that an additional and potentially more significant impact (in terms of economic resilience) is the access to credit without having to liquidate other assets, primarily crops, whose value fluctuates significantly throughout the year. Through participation in a STEP VSLA, farmers no longer need to sell a significant percentage of their harvest to access credit to invest in a future agricultural season or to respond to an emergency (medical issues or a funeral), which can have a negative impact on dietary diversity.

In 2021, facilitation of a large education and awareness raising campaign centred around a football tournament exposed more than 20,000 people to information about elephant behaviour and how to stay safe around elephants. In addition, film nights, community and school trainings have reached more than 20,000 people. A simple knowledge retention survey showed that an average of 79% of respondents retained knowledge regarding key aspects of elephant behaviour and safety around the species. In 2021, STEP reached more than 1,500 farmers through individual outreach conducted by local elephant monitors who collect data on elephant movements.

Lessons learned

Increase benefits *and* reduce costs from wildlife

A critically important lesson that's still in the process of being learned is that behaviour change requires a clear win-win in order to step away from existing norms. The initial beehive fence intervention did not generate enough revenue to justify the work it required, complicating its value proposition for communities. While less directly connected to mitigating crop damage, VSLAs and beekeeping activities generally help to increase household resilience, ideally diluting the impact of crop damage caused by elephants and therefore positively affecting tolerance.

Respect and incorporate existing community structures and norms and build on them wherever possible

The initial beehive fence model was not well suited to the ecology of the RKM GR ecosystem nor did STEP fully account for how critical pre-existing

beekeeping experience was to ensure the success of the intervention. The combination of introducing community members with no previous experience to beekeeping), the challenging ecological environment *and* focusing on the beehive fence structure as the primary framework for the intervention, led to poor results and a lack of buy-in from communities. By stepping away from the beehive fence model and inviting individuals with beekeeping experience to participate in trials of ‘modern beehives,’ participation and honey production significantly increased.

STEP also slightly modified the VSLA structure to allow more flexible share purchasing, accommodating the dynamic livelihood systems that the primarily agro-pastoral communities around the RKM GRs engage in. This has expanded VSLA participation and increased reach into more remote communities.

Better recognise and support locally-led action to reduce IWT

Poaching is caused by a variety of drivers and any hope of developing a strategy to respond to even one of these drivers, requires constant inquiry, innovation, trial and error. Without spending time understanding the roots of HWC, poverty, livelihoods challenges and land tenure systems, it is unlikely that anti-IWT projects will be able to develop a comprehensive roadmap to reduce poaching nor achieve any lasting solution. Exploratory funding is therefore essential to support the deep inquiry that is required to develop comprehensive and multifaceted solutions to such complex issues as poaching and IWT. Building lasting solutions also requires time and trust – speaking to strangers about illegal activities is highly risky. However, an exploratory approach does not have to abandon rigour. Key performance indicators, logframes and SMART metrics can be utilised in the development of questions and in the trial of interventions. In fact, they help hone a theory of change to an ultimately more likely outcome, which is surely the ultimate goal of donors and funders.

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