



TWIX

Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange

**TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION EXCHANGE:
PROMOTING INFORMATION SHARING AND
CO-OPERATION TO REDUCE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE
IN EASTERN AFRICA**

SCOPE AND OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND



TWIX AND ITS IMPACT

Confiscated ivory products. Photo: TRAFFIC

Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange (TWIX) is an online tool developed to facilitate the exchange of information and promote co-operation between law enforcement agencies responsible for combating illegal wildlife trade and implementing CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

The TWIX system consists of two main components: a mailing list and a website. The mailing list allows enforcement officials to communicate and exchange non-nominal information, seek assistance and alert one another to relevant enforcement actions. The TWIX website holds a centralised database of wildlife seizures carried out in participating countries and various resources such as, but not limited to, identification guides, training materials and useful directories, including listing of rescue centres for seized specimens.

TWIX

TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION EXCHANGE



US\$7-23 billion

annual estimated value of global illegal wildlife trade



~60,000 seizure records

concerning wildlife enforcement registered within EU-TWIX



110+ staff

nominated by governments to be part of AFRICA-TWIX



SADC-TWIX

new platform launched in Southern Africa in 2019

WHO CAN ACCESS

Access to TWIX is restricted to law enforcement officials that are involved in CITES enforcement, for example those working within Customs, CITES Management Authorities, wildlife, fisheries and forestry services, the police, prosecution services, and criminal justice departments.

Officials from international organisations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, World Customs Organization (WCO), the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF) and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILO) of the WCO are also eligible to join TWIX.

Wild meat, including a pangolin, for sale. Photo: TRAFFIC / A. Walmsley



CURRENT TWIX PLATFORMS

To date, three TWIX systems have been established: EU-TWIX in 39 European countries, AFRICA-TWIX in six Central African countries and SADC-TWIX is operational in 11 SADC Member States.

The EU-TWIX has been successfully operational since 2005 and connects close to 1200 enforcement officials dealing with illegal wildlife trade issues in 39 European countries (28 EU Member States and 11 neighbouring countries).

The AFRICA-TWIX platform, established in 2016 connects more than 100 officials from six countries of the Central Africa region as comprised by COMIFAC (Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale), namely Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Republic of the Congo. In October 2019, Rwanda has submitted an official request to the COMIFAC Secretariat to join AFRICA-TWIX.

The very recently established (May 2019) SADC-TWIX connects more than 400 officials from eleven SADC Member States namely Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia.

REPLICATING TWIX FOR EAST AFRICA

The development of the Eastern Africa-TWIX will initially be implemented in three countries namely Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and will draw from the experience of these three operational and successful TWIX systems.

CONNECTING ENFORCEMENT ACROSS EASTERN AFRICA

data extraction

wildlife seizure database
in development



monitoring and analysis

analyse trade trends and
flows as they develop



enforcement collaboration

facilitates co-operation on
wildlife crimes cases





SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION



Support for the establishment of a TWIX system for Eastern Africa emanates within the East African Community (EAC) strategy to combat poaching and illegal trade and trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products. The strategy explicitly identifies the establishment of the Eastern Africa-TWIX system as one of its key deliverables on strategic objectives 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 focusing on law enforcement capacity, development issues, and strengthening regional collaboration efforts, respectively.

Declarations, commitments and meetings which also support an Eastern Africa-TWIX:

- ✓ The African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa, May 2015;
- ✓ Zanzibar Declaration on Illegal Trade in Timber and Forest Products, September 2015;
- ✓ The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Annual East Africa Timber Trade Stakeholders' Forum, 2016 to 2019;
- ✓ UNDP Transboundary Environment Crime Experience Sharing Workshop, Arusha, Tanzania, December 2017;
- ✓ EAC meeting of wildlife management experts and development partners, March 2018 UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya; and
- ✓ EAC wildlife law enforcement experts meeting on establishing TWIX, Arusha, Tanzania, December 2018.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

Further support for the establishment of an Eastern Africa-TWIX comes from several Member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and its specialised technical network—the Horn of Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (HAWEN)—by means of commitments under their Regional Strategy for Wildlife Management and HAWEN Action Plan.



RIGHTS AND ROLES

Rights and Obligations of Eastern Africa-TWIX Users (users are government staff only mandated to conduct or support law enforcement):

- ✓ Access to all components of TWIX: mailing list and website;
- ✓ Receive all messages exchanged on the mailing list;
- ✓ Right to post information on the mailing list; and,
- ✓ Right to access all elements of the website: database, resources, directories, archives, etc

Roles of Eastern Africa-TWIX Focal Points:

- ✓ Focal Point for a government agency that joined Eastern Africa-TWIX;
- ✓ First point of contact for other Eastern Africa-TWIX users and Eastern Africa-TWIX administrator;
- ✓ Replies to queries or directs to people who can assist;
- ✓ Provides information about changes amongst Eastern Africa-TWIX users from his/her agency (requests to add/remove members, update contact details, etc.);
- ✓ Provides seizure data to Eastern Africa-TWIX staff for upload to the seizure database or points out to the person who will provide data on regular basis;
- ✓ Communicates the decision on whether their seizure data may be shared outside of the Eastern Africa-TWIX network or not when requests to do so arise; and,
- ✓ Promotes Eastern Africa-TWIX within his/her own organisation.

FUNCTION



BENEFITS OF AN EASTERN AFRICA-TWIX

- ✓ Connects officials from different Eastern African countries via their work email address;
- ✓ Real time information sharing: alerts, routes, dissimulation methods and other relevant information;
- ✓ Rapid identification assistance;
- ✓ Creates an international network of officials implementing CITES at different levels;
- ✓ Knowledge sharing;
- ✓ Quick sharing of seizures and stolen specimens alerts;
- ✓ Triggers investigations;
- ✓ Reveals scope of illegal trade networks;
- ✓ A fount of useful information such as training materials on various topics, identification guides, legal texts;
- ✓ Indicator of capacity building needs; and,
- ✓ Used to monitor current illegal trade patterns (e.g. species, countries, concealment methods most relevant in illegal trade): enabling determination of enforcement priorities.

SOME SUCCESS STORIES FROM EXISTING TWIX SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

The AFRICA-TWIX has facilitated several enforcement actions in Central Africa—for example, seven suspected wildlife traffickers from local freight services and customs were arrested following information sharing and collaboration via AFRICA-TWIX concerning a seizure of 28 elephant tusks in Bangkok in late 2017. Collaborative investigations by INTERPOL and Congolese authorities have been triggered by information exchanged on AFRICA-TWIX.

The SADC-TWIX has triggered investigation of fish jaws trafficking from Madagascar to Mauritius in July 2019. The consignments did not have any export permits, so the Mauritius Customs seized them, and the information was shared on the SADC-TWIX mailing list. The investigation is ongoing. Without the information being shared on the SADC-TWIX mailing list, officials in Madagascar would not know that the seizure occurred.

FURTHER INFORMATION


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Mountain gorilla Gorilla beringei beringei silverback watching through forest, Virunga Mountains, Rwanda. Photo: Andy Rouse / naturepl.com



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the wildlife trade monitoring network