WILDLIFE CRIME INITIATIVE

A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE OF WWF AND TRAFFIC TO HELP TACKLE THE GROWING THREAT POSED BY TRANSNATIONAL, ORGANISED WILDLIFE CRIME
WWF is one of the world’s largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the Earth’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. TRAFFIC is a strategic alliance of WWF and IUCN.

WILDLIFE CRIME IS A SERIOUS CRIME

“Illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law and threatens national security; it degrades ecosystems and is a major obstacle to the efforts of rural communities and indigenous peoples striving to sustainably manage their natural resources. Combating this crime is not only essential for conservation efforts and sustainable development, it will contribute to achieving peace and security in troubled regions where conflicts are fuelled by these illegal activities. I urge all consumers, suppliers and governments to treat crimes against wildlife as a threat to our sustainable future. It’s time to get serious about wildlife crime.”

— UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

WILDLIFE CRIME IS A THREAT TO SPECIES, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We are in the midst of a global poaching crisis that threatens decades of conservation successes as well as the future of many species.

Tens of thousands of elephants are being killed each year in Africa, along with record numbers of rhinos. Meanwhile, Asia’s forests are being silenced as poachers strip them of their species to meet the soaring demand for illegal wildlife products.

Add in the vast trade in illegal timber and fisheries resources and wildlife trafficking is now estimated to be the fourth largest transnational criminal activity in the world – after the trafficking of drugs, counterfeit goods, and people.

Some of the world’s most iconic species – such as rhinos, tigers and turtles – face a battle for survival. But so do numerous other species from pangolins to parrots and primates. But the unprecedented surge in the illegal wildlife trade in recent years poses an immediate threat not only to wildlife but also to national and regional security, the rule of law, sustainable development, and the well-being of local communities.

Attracted by its relatively low risks and high returns, transnational, organised criminal groups have muscled their way into the illegal wildlife trade, bringing with them more sophisticated methods – and greater violence and corruption.

Recognition of this growing threat and the potentially devastating impact of wildlife crime on communities and countries has sparked a major shift in global attitudes. And the realisation that only an urgent global response can tackle the crisis.

WILDLIFE CRIME INITIATIVE

4th LARGEST TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN THE WORLD

Estimated revenues from wildlife trafficking, including the vast trade in illegal timber and fisheries resources, place it fourth on the list of transnational criminal activities.

Front cover
Mba Ndong Marius, a Parcs Gabon Eco Guard displaying seized poached elephant tusks and poachers’ weapons, Oyem, Gabon.
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WHAT IS THE WILDLIFE CRIME INITIATIVE?

The Wildlife Crime Initiative (WCI) is a long-term, collaborative initiative between WWF and TRAFFIC to help tackle the surge in large-scale, transnational organised wildlife crime.

Building on the unprecedented momentum and high-level political will generated by the joint WWF-TRAFFIC Illegal Wildlife Trade Campaign in 2012-13, the WCI will play a key role in urgent global efforts to address the poaching crisis, by expanding the scope and impact of TRAFFIC and WWF’s work on wildlife crime.

Launched in 2014, the initiative represents an expanded 10-year commitment by WWF and TRAFFIC, and marks a major shift in emphasis for both organisations in response to an escalating global crisis.

By strategically using each organisation’s specific skills and resources – WWF’s decades of experience protecting wildlife and working with communities, and TRAFFIC’s unparalleled expertise in monitoring wildlife trafficking – the initiative will maximise its long-term impact on wildlife crime.

The WCI will focus on all points along the illegal wildlife trade chain (poaching, trafficking and consumption) as well as advocating for the adoption and implementation of more effective national and international policies.

In 2014, the WCI launched an expanded commitment to halving the impact of wildlife crime on iconic species by 2024. The WCI will focus on elephants, rhinos, tigers, African great apes, and green and hawksbill turtles. Additional species will be considered in later years.

The WCI will facilitate and foster innovative approaches at local, national and global levels – from promoting higher law enforcement standards in some countries, to designing behavioural change strategies in states where demand is high, to advocating for the authorities to ‘follow the money’.

Critically, the WCI will also focus on building influential relationships and working in concert with a wide and growing number of external partners, including governments, UN agencies, other NGOs and the private sector.

Combining WWF and TRAFFIC’s existing strengths with new approaches and tools, the WCI will help to catalyse systemic change, and support governments, businesses, and consumers to implement the steps necessary to reduce poaching, trafficking and the global demand for illegal products.

The WCI will work with partners to achieve this by focusing on four key pillars – stop the poaching, stop the trafficking, stop the buying and international policy.

Initially, the WCI will focus on iconic species that are being targeted by transnational, organised criminal gangs – such as elephants, rhinos, tigers, African great apes, and green and hawksbill turtles – with the goal of halving the impact of wildlife crime on these species by 2024.

By working towards systemic change, the WCI will also contribute to reducing the illegal trade in other endangered wildlife. And by pursuing this cohesive and collaborative approach, WWF and TRAFFIC will significantly enhance their collective contribution towards global efforts to curtail the poaching and illegal wildlife trade crisis.

These efforts will only succeed if governments, the private sector and civil society organisations all work together to ensure the current momentum around wildlife crime is channelled into an effective global response. With everyone working together, today’s poaching crisis can be contained and a deeper social and environmental crisis averted.

A world where governments and institutions have reduced to negligible levels the catastrophic impacts of wildlife crime on biodiversity and the destabilising impact of wildlife crime on rule of law and development, enabling wildlife populations to thrive with continuing benefits to local communities.

By 2024, the impact of wildlife crime (poaching, trafficking and demand for illegal products) on the conservation targets will be halved.

Conservation targets are species that face a major threat from poaching involving large-scale organised crime, and overlap with WWF and TRAFFIC priority species, places, and thematic programmes. Initially, the WCI will focus on elephants, rhinos, tigers, African great apes, and green and hawksbill turtles. Additional species will be considered in later years.

VISION, GOAL AND THEORY OF CHANGE

Mobilising policy pressure, ensuring transparency and compliance

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY

Stop the poaching

Helping strengthen field protection, conservation and wildlife stewardship

Stop the trafficking

Supporting actions to supress illegal trade and smuggling

Stop the buying

Motivating consumer demand reduction and behavioural change

REDUCED POACHING AND ILLEGAL TRADE IN PRIORITY SPECIES

Reduce motivation for criminal involvement in poaching and illegal trade

Increase the effort: Criminals need to make

Increase the indirect and direct risks for criminals

Reduce the rewards for criminals

PROTECTION/CONSERVATION AT SOURCE

Community support for conservation

Private sector avoidance

Visibility and exposure

Law enforcement, judicial action

Seize criminal assets

Consumer demand reduction

Behavioural change
FOUR PILLARS OF THE WILDLIFE CRIME INITIATIVE

STOP THE POACHING

Objective
By 2018, reduce poaching of flagship species by at least one third from 2013 levels within at least 30 priority land and seascapes.

The WCI will focus its anti-poaching work on strengthening field protection as well as enhancing community stewardship of wildlife.

It will bolster the first line of defence by helping to develop a zero-poaching toolkit with a common set of tools and standards that can be adapted to suit local conditions and by encouraging governments to adopt and implement it.

At the heart of this anti-poaching toolkit will be ways to professionalise the global ranger force, ensuring that rangers in priority places have the equipment, training, support and motivation they need to patrol their parks effectively and protect their wildlife from poachers.

But rangers alone cannot keep the poachers at bay.

They need the eyes and ears and firm backing of local communities, which is why the initiative will also advocate for enhanced community management of natural resources – and for the equitable distribution of benefits. This will boost sustainable development and give communities a real stake in conserving their wildlife.

Together, professionalised rangers and committed communities will force poachers to take greater risks to supply the illegal wildlife market.

STOP THE TRAFFICKING

Objective
By 2018, trafficking of key illegal wildlife products for which trade is already being monitored (ivory, rhino horn, tiger parts and marine turtle products) is reduced by at least one-third from baseline levels.

The WCI aims to help stem the flow of illegal wildlife products by working with governments, law enforcement bodies and the private sector.

The WCI will catalyse efforts to detect and seize illegal products and convict those responsible. It will advocate for the use of new technologies for detection at ports, markets and in cyberspace; better intelligence systems to help dismantle criminal networks; and improved judicial processes so that kingpins end up behind bars not back on the streets.

But it’s not just a case of strengthening current efforts. The WCI will catalyse innovative ideas to help stop the traffickers, including developing new information sharing platforms, working with transport and logistics companies, and advocating for law enforcement authorities to seize the proceeds of wildlife crime and ‘follow the money’.

Wildlife crime also breeds – and feeds off – corruption so the initiative will focus on ways to mitigate this and improve accountability.

With this multi-pronged approach, the WCI will help to deter traffickers by making it far more expensive and risky to smuggle.

Stemming the supply of illegal wildlife products is vital, but it will only be a temporary solution unless demand is significantly and permanently reduced.

The WCI will focus on changing consumer behaviour in critical markets, particularly China, Vietnam and Thailand, by transforming current attitudes towards the consumption of illegal wildlife products.

STOP THE BUYING

Objective

By 2018, the demand for selected threatened species products will be reduced by at least one-third in China (ivory, marine turtle shell products, rhino horn and tiger products), Vietnam (rhino horn), and Thailand (ivory).

The initiative will run innovative, evidence-based behaviour change campaigns, aiming to foster change from ‘within’ society. These campaigns will target emotional motivations, such as fashion trends and status symbols, and functional motivations, such as perceptions about the health benefits of certain products.

Along with urging governments to do more to reduce demand, the WCI will run social marketing campaigns that seek to change the mindsets of influential groups – such as business leaders and young people – with carefully crafted approaches.

And to reduce the availability of illegal products in the market the initiative will work to convince restaurants, shops and Internet companies to stop stocking them.

Changing behaviour will not happen overnight. But it will happen. Slowly but surely demand will be reduced - and so will the incentive for criminals to act and the threat to numerous species.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Objective

By 2018, high-level policy commitments made at key international and regional fora lead to effective implementation of WCI priority anti-poaching, anti-trafficking, and demand reduction actions at the national level in at least 10 key countries.

There is a growing interest in addressing wildlife crime at the highest political levels, exemplified in the landmark London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014.

The international policy pillar aims to create an enabling environment to help sustain this global momentum and ensure that commitments to tackle wildlife crime are translated into concrete and effective action at the national level.

It will focus on institutions like the United Nations and treaties like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as well as other international and regional fora, conventions and institutions that can have the greatest impact on wildlife crime.

The WCI will push for official recognition of the scale and widespread impact of the illegal wildlife trade, and the need for a coordinated response.

It aims to secure concrete commitments, including anti-corruption measures and mechanisms, to increase accountability and compliance.

By securing concrete political commitments and stronger policies, the international policy pillar will support the work of the other three pillars.
Long regarded as a low priority ‘environmental’ issue, governments are now focusing far more attention on wildlife crime. Never before has there been such high level political engagement from countries around the world, including priority source, transit and consumer states.

World leaders have committed to action in major international fora and are now developing new broader approaches to wildlife crime, with national level task forces and strategic plans.

Wildlife crime has been discussed as a threat to security in the UN Security Council, while key international institutions have become increasingly active through the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) – with Interpol, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Customs Organization, and the World Bank partnering with CITES, the global authority on wildlife trade.

In this environment, WWF and TRAFFIC can play a critical role in catalysing action and systemic change. The Wildlife Crime Initiative was launched to make the most of this opportunity – to use WWF and TRAFFIC’s combined strengths to boost the global response to wildlife crime.

### Why Now is the Time to Act

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Wildlife Crime Facts

**UP TO 30,000**

It is estimated that up to 30,000 elephants are being poached for their ivory in Africa each year.

**3,200**

There are as few as 3,200 tigers left in the wild.

**9,300%**

Since 2007, rhino poaching in South Africa has soared by 9,300% with a record 1,215 killed in 2014.

Wildlife crime is estimated to be the 4th largest transnational criminal activity after trafficking in drugs, counterfeit goods and people.

Nepal has registered three years of zero poaching of rhinos since 2011, and one year when not a single tiger, elephant or rhino were poached.

For more information on the WCI, please contact:

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