



Rwanda's First Symposium on Illegal Wildlife Trafficking November 2017 Summary & Resolutions



Background

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking is now among the most lucrative international crimes worldwide involving organised and dangerous international criminal syndicates. Across the world, wild animals and their body parts are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms. It is every country's responsibility to address wildlife crime and consider how to improve law enforcement in their country and to co-operate regionally and internationally to combat this trade which is driving many iconic species to extinction.

Rwanda has invested a lot in the protection of its endangered and iconic species. As a result, the critically endangered mountain gorillas are now thriving, the elephant population is growing, and eastern black rhinos have been reintroduced to Akagera National Park. As Rwanda now has species that are some of the most targeted for illegal wildlife trade, such as elephants and rhinos, the country has to strengthen the anti-poaching teams (which it already has) and increase efforts into building the capacity of different stakeholders who can play a role in monitoring, reporting, investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes.

Large scale illegal wildlife crime is not prominent in Rwanda. However, a number of seizures of ivory and other endangered species parts have been recorded in previous years, likely to have been in transit through Rwanda. The illegal wildlife trade constantly evolves. To stop it, it is important that the government and other stakeholders understand the trends and are aware of the most up to date data on what is being traded and where the trade is occurring. There is therefore a need for law enforcement capacity building for police, customs, and judiciary personnel and the setting up of a national database for wildlife crime cases as well as community awareness focusing on the penalties for wildlife crime.

The workshop

A 2-day symposium on Illegal Wildlife Trafficking (IWT) was organised by the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), in partnership with Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA), on November 22nd and 23rd, 2017 at the Fatima Hotel in Musanze, Rwanda. Participants included law enforcement personnel (Rwanda National Police, Border Control Officials, Wildlife Crime Department), prosecutors and the judiciary, journalists and national and international environmental organisations (see list of attendees).

The primary objective of the symposium was to raise awareness of IWT nationally, regionally and globally but also identify the challenges faced by professionals in Rwanda to tackle IWT and to develop action points and ways forward to effectively combat and prevent IWT both within the country and across its borders. These outputs will contribute towards the development of a National Collaboration Strategy to combat Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in Rwanda.



Summary of Presentations

The 12 invited speakers presented on various themes providing a global, regional and national perspective to the issue of IWT. The key points are summarised below (PDF presentations available to participants).

- **Illegal Wildlife Trafficking is one of the 5 most lucrative global crimes worldwide;** it is a significant threat to many species and it undermines the rule of law and good governance, encouraging corruption and bad governance.
- Smugglers are continuously devising new ways to evade law enforcement and given the high returns of this illegal trade, are investing significant resources in order to achieve this.
- **To eradicate IWT it is fundamental to secure high level political will and engagement.**
- **If Rwanda wants to be at the forefront of fighting IWT, the country has to invest more in capacity building. Participants showed a need of additional training such as specific training for police and customs (how to search passengers/luggage/cargo at airports and borders for illegal wildlife trade products, **how to identify species/products**, how to seize illegally traded live animals and wildlife products, chain of custody and case file preparation, collecting evidence and investigating wildlife crimes).**
- In line with capacity building, **a forensic laboratory** was highlighted to be one of the tools that can help the process of prosecution by helping to identify confiscated wildlife products. A laboratory would also position the country at a high level if it could serve neighbouring countries.

- Kenya has developed a set of **law resource materials** which can be adapted for Rwanda going forward. These resources include: Guide of the Wildlife Act of Kenya; Wildlife Offences in Kenya; and Reference Guide for the Investigation and Prosecution of Wildlife Related Offences.
- In Rwanda there are various illegally kept animals resulting from the illegal trade. This is illustrated by the case of the **Grey Crowned Crane** which **have seen a population decline of 50-80%** over the past 45 years because of the illegal pet trade (current estimates indicate a population of approximately 500 individuals in Rwanda). With concerted efforts by RDB and RWCA (including a media campaign and amnesty to encourage registration; rehabilitation, reintroduction, conservation of the natural habitat and community engagement) there has been a significant drop in in-country trade in the last three years, but the risk is that the cranes may be illegally smuggled across borders.
- In **Akagera National Park** poaching used to be rampant and out of control but since 2010, has been clamped down with a series of measures (e.g., border fence, high investment in law enforcement, training, equipment, community engagement, etc.). Taking action makes a difference but efforts must be maintained and sustained. Akagera is a huge resource for Rwanda and has to be managed appropriately, constantly adapting to the poachers' new strategies.
- In **Volcanoes National Park** the main threats are poaching, water collection, bamboo cutting and honey collection, while some cases of cross border confiscation have also been recorded (7 Grauer gorillas, 2 mountain gorillas and a chimpanzee from DRC in the last 10 years). The focus of the antipoaching strategy is working with Community Based Organisations in support of patrols and poaching prevention, collaborating with local authorities and transboundary management of contiguous parks (including coordinated patrols with ICCN and UWA). Many snares are still found and there is the problem of incentive-dependence which may make some of the achieved successes unsustainable.
- In **Nyungwe National Park** poaching continues to be an issue, with thousands of snares removed each year (over 13,000 in 2016). Transboundary poaching and other illegal activities along the Rwanda-Burundi border are also an issue, as is mining. Nyungwe is surrounded by very high population densities and what can appear as minor offences to a judge (as in hunting for cane rats or firewood collection), is having a huge cumulative effect and is putting the park's future at risk.
- Achieving **Zero Poaching** is possible, using the 6 pillars approach through the Zero Poaching Toolkit (<http://zeropoaching.org/>). under the categories of Assessment, Technology, Capacity, Community, Prosecution, Cooperation. Zero Poaching CAN be achieved by setting realistic goals (a specific area or target species) and establishing strong collaborations between governments, international and national organisations.

- Rwanda can learn many lessons from Malawi's **Inter-Agency Committee on Combatting Wildlife Crimes (IACCWC)**. It was established with the proper buy-in from the heads of agencies (including Police, Customs, Environmental Agencies, Revenue Authority, Immigration, Prosecutor and relevant Non-Governmental agencies). Started using the NEST model by Interpol, it developed into a locally viable model which led to the establishment of the IACCWC with the function of facilitating investigations and prosecutions in wildlife crimes, revision of the laws relevant for prosecuting wildlife cases and strengthening collaboration and co-ordination among relevant agencies to establish a rapid response team to address wildlife crime cases.

Group Discussions

Following the speakers' presentations, the participants divided into groups to discuss three key topics.

Group 1: How can we share information and better collaborate locally, nationally and regionally? Who are the stakeholders and what should the chain of communication be? What is needed to strengthen and enhance collaboration between key stakeholders, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations to combat IWT?

Group 2: What are the weaknesses or gaps in our current legal framework for combatting IWT? How can we address them?

Group 3: Identification of the current gaps to raise awareness of IWT and suggested actions. Are organisations, public and civil society aware of IWT and how can we sensitise them?

Key Resolutions

From the discussion groups, participants proposed resolutions to combat IWT in Rwanda.

➔ *Form and train a National Task Force on Illegal Wildlife Trafficking that is composed of all relevant government institutions, NGOs and local leaders.*

➔ *Enact a clear wildlife law and a clear environmental management law which address all the issues of wildlife conservation and environmental management with clear penal provisions.*

➔ *Increase sensitisation on IWT*

- *Mainstream conservation sensitisation within the government priorities*
- *Introduce signs at airports and borders to warn about prohibited items*
- *Conduct research on the market chain of IWT and share findings with law enforcement authorities*

Group Presentations

Group 1: Collaborative network for information sharing for illegal wildlife trafficking

Chain of communication (who are the stakeholders?)

Local communities

Local authorities

Customs at borders/airports

Security organisations e.g. Police

Media

Wildlife experts (relevant institutions e.g., RDB, REMA, RWCA, NGOs etc.)

Prosecutors

Judges

How do we share information internally and regionally? How can we better collaborate locally, nationally and regionally?

Locally

Regular joint meetings with all stakeholders

Toll free number to call in case of alarming situations/cases

Community sensitisation through campaigns, mass media, Umuganda day, churches/mosques etc.

National/Regional

National Task Force with regional focal points

Sharing of information and resources regionally e.g. laboratories

Good communication of the international conventions concerning illegal Wildlife Trafficking such as CITES, CBD

What is needed to enhance/strengthen a better collaboration between key stakeholders, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations to combat IWT at local, national and regional levels?

Form a national Task Force on IWT that is composed of all relevant government institutions, NGOs, local leaders,

Training of the task force

Organise anti WT clubs country wide in schools

Ensure that judicial organs are trained abroad where countries have expertise on this issue

Ensure that educational institutions involve IWT in the curriculum (more wildlife lawyers will be created in the process)

Invest in high tech equipment for detection and analysis

Group II: Identification of current gaps for combatting IWT and proposed actions: What are the weaknesses/gaps in our current legal framework in addressing IWT? How to address them?

Legal gaps:

Scattered laws which are incoherent and only some acts are prohibited and punished. Need an intensive and harmonised legal framework.

Lack of investigative powers for conservation

Lack of coordination among different stakeholders

Lack of provision punishing a person who kills or injures a wild animal

Lack of a clear legal framework between wildlife offences (RDB) and environmental law (REMA)

Lack of legal regime protecting wildlife outside national parks (REMA or RDB)

Lack of provision protecting wild animals which are not on the list of protected animals (see for example art 436 CP protects only livestock or domestic animals not wild animals)

Legal provision governing the use of guns by park rangers

Some examples of criminal acts which are not prohibited and thus not punished

- Killing animals, cutting trees or setting fire to a classified forest or within any wildlife protected area
- Poaching, injuring or killing any protected animal
- Discharging any hazardous substances, waste or oil into a designated wildlife area contrary to the law
- Polluting wildlife habitats and ecosystems
- Knowingly introducing an invasive species into a wildlife conservation area
- Keeping or being found in possession of a wildlife product or dealing in a wildlife product without a permit or exempted in accordance with any provision of the law
- Engaging in sport hunting or any other recreational hunting or engaging in hunting for the purposes of subsistence or engaging in hunting for bush meat trade, or is in possession of or is dealing in any meat of any wildlife species
- Trading, transporting, importing, exporting, re-exporting or introducing any specimen of a wildlife species or a wildlife product into or from Rwanda without a permit issued by the competent authority
- Making a false claim or making a false statement to the Wildlife Conservation and Compensation Service in respect of a wildlife damage claim
- Entering or residing in a national park or reserve otherwise than under license, permit or in the course of his duty
- Carrying out logging in a national park or reserve; clearing and cultivating or keeping cattle any land in the national park or reserve;
- Conveying into a protected area or being found within a protected area in possession of any fire arm, ammunition, arrow, spear, snare, trap or similar device without authorization; undertaking any extractive activity in wildlife protected areas;

How to address them

Enact a clear wildlife law and a clear environment management law which addresses all the issues of wildlife conservation and environmental management with clear penal provisions.

Group III: Current gaps to raise awareness of IWT and suggested actions

Gaps:

Lack of legal provisions

Lack of awareness/ mindset about wildlife (general)

- Crop raiding by a wild animal or livestock
- Community property/ No one's property
- Cultural inheritance (hunting not perceived as crime)
- Lack of knowledge about the importance of wildlife (economy, ecology, etc.)

Lack of information sharing about legal provisions

- Protected species of plants and animal species
- Protective and punitive provisions

Strategies

Organise extensive sensitisation initiatives

- Educate mindset
- Organise specific programmes for youth (insert in school curricula)
- Put emphasis on importance of wildlife

Avail documentation for stakeholders at different levels

- Legal provisions and international arrangements
- Organise regular refresher courses
- Intensify collaboration with local leadership
- Collective mechanisms for awareness (like for GBV, wetlands)
- Enhance clubs/ ANICO programmes

Use airports/ borders to warn about prohibited items (e.g. mention on air ticket, publicity boards)

Extensive use of media

Identify market chain and train about prevailing threats

Curb/ influence the market demand (high level involvement)

Include reparation in IWT

List of Presentations:

1. Global perspectives and trends in the illegal wildlife trafficking (*Dr. Winnie Kiiru, Technical Advisor, Elephant Protection Initiative, Kenya*)
2. An overview of the CITES regulations and its implementation in Rwanda (*Dr. Tony Mudakikwa, RDB and CITES focal point Rwanda*)
3. The current status of illegal wildlife crime cases in Rwanda (*Telesphore Ngoga, RDB*)
4. Investigation, prosecution and adjudication of wildlife crimes in Rwanda: Challenges and prospects (*Jean Pierre Habarurema, Prosecutor General*)
5. Wildlife as evidence (*Jim Karani, Wildlife Direct, Kenya*)
6. Case Study: The illegal trade in Grey Crowned Cranes, a market chain analysis and strategies to combat wildlife trade (*Dr. Olivier Nsengimana, RWCA*)
7. Common illegal wildlife crimes and efforts to combat poaching at Akagera National Park (*Jes Gruner, Park Manager*)
8. Common wildlife crimes and efforts to combat poaching in Volcanoes National Park (*Prosper Uwingeri, PNV Chief Park Warden*)
9. Nyungwe National Park – experience in combatting wildlife crimes (*Pierre Ntthemuka, NNP Chief Park Warden*)
10. Zero Poaching (*David Greer, WWF*)
11. La collaboration entre agences de lutte contre la criminalité faunique: cas de la fermeture du marché de l'ivoire de Kinshasa DRC / Inter-agency collaboration and support of partners in fighting wildlife crime : A case study of the closure of the ivory market of Kinshasa DRC (*Cleo Mashini, TRAFFIC, DRC*)
12. Establishing an inter-agency committee on combatting wildlife crimes- the Malawian Perspective (*Tione Atate Namanja, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Combating Wildlife Crime, Malawi*)