WEST AFRICA BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

COMBATTING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING COMPONENT BRIEF
BACKGROUND

Wildlife trafficking is the international illegal trade of whole, or parts & products of wildlife species that are protected by national or international law. It can involve the trade of living or dead animals, tissues such as skins, bones or meat, or other products. The practice is considered illegal whether the animals were poached directly, purchased, or received as a gift.

Wildlife trafficking is one of the most extreme threats to biodiversity. This illegal trade results in the disappearance of many animals, trees and aquatic species. Wildlife trafficking activities are a critical conservation concern that also endangers human lives, and threatens peace and stability in many parts of the world. In West Africa, the problem has risen to extreme levels with elephants, pangolins, rhinoceros, sharks, chimpanzees, gorillas, and several precious tree species critically impacted.

The illegal wildlife trade is worth $19 billion a year. Nearly 100 African elephants poached per day and in December 2015, 700 kg of ivory, worth one million U.S. dollars, were shipped from Nigeria through Singapore and seized in Thailand. In January 2016, 16 pairs of elephant tusks weighing 70 kg transiting from Chad and Niger to Cote d’Ivoire were seized in Burkina Faso. In June 2016, 500 kg of Pangolin scales coming from Guinea and destined for Nigeria were seized in Kenya.

To tackle this threat, several initiatives have been established at the global, regional, and national levels:

- The Convention on Trade in Threatened and Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is a multilateral treaty set up in 1973 to protect endangered plants and animals. Nearly all West African countries are signatories to the treaty, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has included CITES in its Environment Policy.
- An unprecedented UN resolution to tackle wildlife trafficking passed on June 30, 2015.

As part of its response to President Obama’s directive, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established the 5-year West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) Program, which will join with West African and international partners to combat wildlife crime and trafficking in West Africa.

WA BiCC’S APPROACH

The overall goal of WA BiCC is to improve conservation and support climate-resilient, low-emission growth across West Africa. Reducing biodiversity loss caused by international trade in wildlife species and their products is critical to reaching this goal. WA BiCC is working with its regional and national partners to strengthen policies, laws and regulations on wildlife trafficking, and increase the capacity of networks and institutions to strengthen, develop and/or enforce wildlife legislation.

Communication and advocacy campaigns will help the general public better understand this complex issue and influence attitudes and behaviors to help fight wildlife trafficking. Primary activities include:

- Intensive analysis of wildlife trafficking issues and impacts on wildlife to establish clear and specific threats to biodiversity in West Africa;
- Development of priority responses to wildlife trafficking including the training of customs agents, prosecutors and judges to more effectively pursue and prosecute wildlife crime;
- Revision of national and regional policies, laws and regulations and promoting effective enforcement;
- Strengthening national and regional networks and institutions by building their capacity to enforce anti-trafficking laws;
- Raising awareness of the problem and conducting behavior change campaigns.
WA BiCC’s core regional partners are ECOWAS, the Abidjan Convention and the Mano River Union, who will receive technical, financial and material support from the program. WA BiCC’s strategy is to work with specialized agencies, institutions and networks including the EAGLE (Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement) Network and its constituent member organizations such as the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA) and the Guinée Application de la Loi Faunique (GALF), as well as the national Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) authorities, TRAFFIC (Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network), the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Born Free Foundation, and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and Focal Institution(s) within priority countries.

This strategy will be powered by WA BiCC’s grants mechanism. Once an intervention is identified or planned, WA BiCC will issue Requests for Applications for these specialized institutions to apply for grants and undertake those actions that will help tackle wildlife trafficking in West Africa.
HOW YOU CAN HELP COMBAT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

• Inform the nearest National Protected Area Authority office if you see or suspect any cases of wildlife trafficking.
• Contact our team at one of the addresses provided below.
• Visit our offices in Accra or Freetown and talk to our communications and behavior change team to identify other ways in which you could help to combat wildlife trafficking.
• Apply to the WA BiCC Grants Program.

CONTACT US

• Wildlife Trafficking Specialist: Michael Balinga michael.balinga@wabicc.org
• Communications Officer: David Aduama david.aduama@wabicc.org

WA BICC REGIONAL PARTNERS

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
Mano River Union (MRU)
Abidjan Convention

This brief was last updated August 2016 (Version 1)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.wabicc.org
Email info@wabicc.org

Accra Office:
House No. F185/6, 2nd Labone Link, North Labone, Accra
Stephen Kelleher – Chief of Party
Contact +233 207 960 905

Freetown Office:
41 WI Derrick Drive, Off Spur Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Leonis Sesay – Administrative Point of Contact
Contact +232 76 820 622

This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this brief are the sole responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.