



WILDLIFE CRIME TECH CHALLENGE

ISSUE 4: CORRUPTION

Tackle corruption

Corruption, defined by USAID as “the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain,¹” is a major impediment to fighting wildlife crime. Corruption occurs at multiple stages along the supply chains for illegal wildlife, and may involve customs and transportation officials, law enforcement personnel, and officials at all levels of government.²

We are seeking innovative solutions to tackle corruption in wildlife trafficking

Solutions may focus, for example, on enabling scrutiny of public sector actions, providing greater transparency of law enforcement and judicial operations, facilitating whistleblowing, exposing financial or money-laundering trails, and generally improving accountability.

Current state of the issue: corruption in wildlife trafficking

Corruption along wildlife trafficking supply chains typically takes three forms: bribery, diplomatic or military cover, and cronyism.³

Examples of Bribery

- Poachers may bribe game wardens to look the other way, provide information on the location of animals, or even supply weapons.⁴
- Criminals may bribe enforcement officers to release suspects accused of wildlife trafficking.⁵
- Traffickers may bribe customs and/or security officials to not search luggage or to allow illegal cargo to pass unimpeded.⁶
- Illegal hunters may bribe officials to issue documents such as hunting licenses in excess of those legally permitted, false papers attesting to the legality of an illicit specimen, or trophy export permits.⁷

Examples of Diplomatic or Military Cover

- The use of foreign embassy premises to arrange transactions for illegal wildlife parts⁸
- The transportation of trafficked wildlife parts by diplomats and in the diplomatic pouch⁹
- Transportation of illicit wildlife shipments on naval vessels or military vehicles

Examples of Cronyism

- Enforcement officers may become involved in wildlife trafficking supply chains because their relationships with the judiciary and senior officials may protect them from prosecution.¹⁰
- Customs officials may sell confiscated wildlife parts for personal gain due to a sense of impunity.¹¹
- Judges may fail to bring trafficking cases to trial due to the involvement of high-level government officials in smuggling rings.¹²

A fourth cross cutting element is money laundering. Proceeds from the sale of illicit wildlife goods are often legitimized through laundering and moved through financial mechanisms around the world. The movement of funds from the illicit economy into the legal economy is a form of corruption, and facilitates the operations of wildlife trafficking networks around the world.¹³

Current efforts to reduce corruption

There have been several approaches to tackling corruption as it relates to wildlife crime. These can generally be grouped into the following categories:

“Naming and Shaming.” The purpose of “naming and shaming” is to draw sufficient scrutiny to force behavior change. For example, in 2010, Indonesia’s national anti-corruption commission named 43 members of parliament and 10 ministers that it alleged were complicit in wildlife crime. Other efforts go further. One wildlife-focused NGO facilitates transparency in law enforcement by catching local officials on camera taking bribes. The NGO has a media arm that broadcasts its efforts, and a legal team that helps bring criminal cases to court. It should be noted that in many places government permission is required for this sort of activity, and the NGO in question has obtained it.

Strengthening Institutions: These efforts focus on instilling pride in duty and developing better systems for documenting actions, which increases transparency. Many large international NGOs partner with law-enforcement organizations in Southeast Asia and Africa to improve their capacity and transparency. In fact, USAID is a sponsor of some of these efforts (for example, ASEAN WEN). In Kenya, a wildlife crimes unit has been established specifically to assist in prosecutions, and has already claimed a number of successes.

Strengthening Civil Society: Efforts to strengthen civil society entails providing platforms to organizations that enable them to collaborate and work more effectively. Examples of initiatives that strengthen civil society’s ability to hold government accountable include several USAID programs in the areas of democracy and governance, with which Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge solutions can potentially work.

Facilitating Whistleblowing. This category of efforts aims to make it easier for whistleblowers to anonymously provide useful information to authorities. Several organizations have developed online repositories that collect accusations from whistleblowers and publish validated reports to the public. There are also smart phone applications that make it possible for users to anonymously report wildlife trafficking incidents to the police through safe and secure platforms. USAID has experience helping governments draft whistleblower laws and create appropriate protection systems, including witness protection programs, through its rule of law work.

Finally, the topic of stemming illicit financial flows has been heavily publicized. While there have been some successes in tracking illicit financial flows, efforts are still focused on creating a framework that can bring together parties to address this complex issue.¹⁴

The way forward

Winning solutions to the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge will either effectively help enforce anti-corruption laws or target one or more of the underlying causes of corruption in wildlife crime. Below are examples of potential solutions, which are provided only for illustrative purposes.

- A technology-enabled solution that can facilitate community stewardship of wildlife resources and reduce the incentives for corruption
- Tools that enable better monitoring of financial flows that support wildlife crime
- Tools that allow better monitoring of law enforcement and other officials while they are on duty; This is emblematic of a broader array of technology solutions that focus on applying public scrutiny to public sector actions
- Tools that enhance understanding of corruption; Better knowledge of patterns of corruption at critical control points, such as ports, could help law enforcement narrow its focus and improve efficiency in the deployment of resources

This list is by no means exhaustive, and creative and impactful technology solutions that target corruption in other ways are highly encouraged.

Useful links

- USAID Anticorruption Strategy accessible at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdaca557.pdf
- World Bank: Economic and social consequences of corruption in transition countries accessible at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/Anticorruption/chapter2.pdf>
- International Corruption Hunters Alliance accessible at <https://collaboration.worldbank.org/groups/international-corruption-hunters-alliance>
- UNODC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit accessible at http://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/resources/pub/Wildlife_Crime_Analytic_Toolkit.pdf
- Corruption, Environment, and the UN Convention Against Corruption accessible at http://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2012/Corruption_Environment_and_the_UNCAC.pdf

¹ USAID. (2004) USAID Anti-Corruption Strategy, 8.

² USAID. (2004) USAID Anti-Corruption Strategy, 8.

³ Wyatt, T., & Cao, A.N. (2014). Corruption and Wildlife Trafficking. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 8.

⁴ Martini, M. U4 Expert Answer, (2013). Wildlife Crime and Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 3.

⁵ Environmental Investigation Agency. (2013). Vanishing Point, 19.

⁶ Environmental Investigation Agency. (2013). Vanishing Point, 21.

⁷ Martini, "U4 Expert Answer, Wildlife Crime and Corruption," *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 3.

⁸ Wyatt, T., & Cao, A.N. (2014). Corruption and Wildlife Trafficking. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 9.

⁹ Martini, M. U4 Expert Answer, (2013). Wildlife Crime and Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 4.

¹⁰ Martini, M. U4 Expert Answer, (2013). Wildlife Crime and Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 3.

¹¹ Martini, M. U4 Expert Answer, (2013). Wildlife Crime and Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 4.

¹² Martini, M. U4 Expert Answer, (2013). Wildlife Crime and Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 3.

¹³ Wyatt, T., & Cao, A.N. (2014). Corruption and Wildlife Trafficking. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 8.

¹⁴ Reed, Q., & Fontana, A. Corruption and illicit financial flows: the limits and possibilities of current approaches. *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center*, 12.