



National and Transnational Serious Crimes Investigative Unit in Tanzania

Tanzania's Protected Area Management Solutions Foundation

Summary

Tanzania's Protected Area Management Solutions Foundation has worked alongside – and empowered – the National and Transnational Serious Crimes Investigative Unit (the Unit) since 2014 to combat wildlife trafficking and poaching. This effort has received significant support and collaboration from a number of private American donors and partners, including assistance from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of State, and the PROTECT project (Promoting Tanzania's Environment, Conservation, and Tourism), an initiative of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). With guidance and capacity building support from the foundation, the Unit has become one of the most effective and recognized counter-trafficking teams in Africa, having completely changed the game and gained an advantage over notorious wildlife crime syndicates in Tanzania.

Problem

From 2009-2014, more than 60% of the Tanzanian elephant population was lost to poaching, which accounted for 30% of all illegally killed elephants on the African continent during that same period. The devastation hit southern Tanzania particularly hard, with the elephant population of the Selous-Mikumi landscape decreasing from 45,000 to 15,000 and the Ruaha-Rungwa landscape population decreasing from 34,000 to 8,000.

Learning Questions Addressed:

- What are examples of institutional arrangements, such as dedicated units or embedded programs, that improved the capacity of enforcement or prosecution staff?
- What are good examples of systems, particularly judicial systems, that have made improvements in combating wildlife trafficking enforcement?

The Foundation seeks to address a number of key issues concerning wildlife trafficking in Tanzania, including:

- Corruption and minimal political will to fully tackle investigations and cases, especially against high-level traffickers.
- Use of rudimentary and reactive tactics to combat wildlife trafficking that focus on lower-level poachers.
- Poor record of prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of environmental crimes.
- Limited interagency coordination among Tanzanian law enforcement agencies and donors.

These issues have been widely publicized, with the international spotlight increasingly falling on the illicit ivory trade. However, as recently as 2014, few solutions to stem the poaching crisis seemed to have gained traction in source countries like Tanzania.

Approach

To address Tanzania's wildlife crime crisis, the foundation took extraordinary risks and identified, trained, and empowered a highly skilled and experienced team whose members had not traditionally worked in the wildlife sector. The Unit was formed in the wake of the 1998 terrorist bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya to focus on countering terrorism. Years later, the unit expanded their focus to anti-piracy and anti-robbery efforts. By November 2014, the foundation supported the Unit to operationalize a wildlife trafficking mandate from the Government of Tanzania. The foundation fully embedded itself within the Unit and provided daily mentoring and logistics support as well as equipment, software, and more advanced training in intelligence-driven methods. The foundation also worked from the ground level up, starting with training village game scouts in poaching hotspots all the way to the upper levels of Tanzania's intelligence community. The foundation defended the Unit from corruption and political sabotage and introduced them to an array of experts who helped build the skills of top wildlife law enforcement professionals. The foundation set up programs beyond law enforcement, such as education, human-wildlife conflict prevention, anti-poaching media campaigns, and other development initiatives that build up national political will to combat wildlife crimes.

Results

Between November 2014 and March 2017, the Unit apprehended more than 1,415 suspects, leading to 436 prosecutions and 358 convictions. Eight of those criminals were sentenced to more than 30 years in prison, and 71 received sentences of more than 15 years. Many cases are still pending. A total of 428 firearms were also seized and removed from circulation over this period, along with 4,260 rounds of ammunition.

In Memoriam: Wayne Lotter

Wayne Lotter dedicated his life to protecting wild animals and places. He served as a wildlife ranger in South Africa's Kruger National Park 25 years ago, and then in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. In 2009, he, along with Krissie Clark and Ally Namangaya, founded PAMS to address various threats to biodiversity in Tanzania and across Africa just as the elephant poaching and ivory trafficking crisis started to spike. On August 16, 2017, Wayne and Krissie were traveling from Arusha to Dar-es-Salaam. As they took their regular taxi home, three gunmen surrounded them and one shot and killed Wayne. Wayne had supported sensitive criminal investigations and received death threats for years. The circumstances surrounding Wayne's death and its likely relationship to his work continue to be investigated by Tanzanian police. One thing is certain: the work of PAMS and the Unit will go on.

Two of the Unit's most publicized cases involve the arrest and successful prosecution of notorious trafficker Boniafe Mariango, nicknamed Shetani (Swahili for "The Devil"). He was sentenced to 12 years in prison in March 2017. Judgment for a second, more severe case against him is expected in 2018. Shetani operated a poaching network across five African countries that was responsible for the deaths of thousands of elephants. His arrest led to the prosecution of Yang Fenglan (nicknamed "The Ivory Queen"), who has been involved in wildlife crime in Tanzania for decades.

While these cases have received ongoing media attention, several others have been even more significant in terms of their scope, damaging syndicates that traffic from source regions in west and east Africa to demand hotspots in southeast Asia.

About this case study series: In 2017, USAID collected [case studies](#) addressing the questions posed in the [Combating Wildlife Trafficking Learning Agenda](#). The finalists represent both USAID-funded and non-USAID-funded activities from around the world. The information provided in the case study series does not necessarily represent the views or positions of USAID or the U.S. Government.

Lessons

- **Having outside experts embedded in the Unit has proven to be valuable for capacity building, on-the-job training, and mentoring.** These relationships go beyond short training sessions, lasting sometimes over several months or years, but ultimately resulting in stronger outcomes and more sustainable law enforcement.
- **Corruption derails efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, so fighting corruption is just as important as ending poaching.** Corruption can overwhelm wildlife agencies and render them ineffective or even complicit in trafficking. The Unit has adopted a zero tolerance policy around corruption.
- **Software and technical support can do wonders for law enforcement agencies, but it must be appropriate for the given users.** Clearly defined targets and objectives are necessary, with a long-term training plan to ensure uptake, technical support, and sustainability.
- **Without political will and proper performance incentives, technological solutions alone will not work.** The foundation and the Unit have developed strong systems to build political will and ensure stronger performance of its team, from bonuses to the deeper cultivation of pride in protecting Tanzania's wildlife and natural heritage.
- **Providing support along the law enforcement chain is critical to ensuring that a given case moves from preliminary investigation into conviction and sentencing.** The Unit provides such capacity building along the chain of law enforcement, ensuring that the enforcement process is effective from arrest through sentencing.
- **Poaching syndicates share intelligence and coordinate activities.** Law enforcement and donor networks should do the same. Competition over donors and territories often render activities that combat wildlife trafficking counterproductive, if not detrimental. As an interagency task force, the Unit has built this type of alliance among agencies and donors.

To learn more about Protected Area Management Solutions Foundation, visit: <https://pamsfoundation.org>