



# Wildlife Crimes Unit in Indonesia

## Wildlife Conservation Society

Photo credit: WCS

### Summary

Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) Wildlife Crimes Unit takes a unique approach to combat wildlife trafficking in Indonesia. The Unit – made up of WCS staff and their informants – performs intelligence work, assists law enforcement, helps build capacity for combating wildlife trafficking among law enforcement officers, and raises public awareness through the media. The Wildlife Crimes Unit works with various key agencies including: the police; the Supreme Court of Indonesia; Attorney General's Office; Customs and Excise; Ministry of Environment and Forestry; Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries; and Indonesia's Financial Transactions and Analysis Centre. Since it began operations in 2003, the Unit has supported more than 500 sting operations to arrest more than 600 wildlife trafficking criminals, with a sentencing rate of higher than 90%.

### Learning Questions Addressed:

- What factors are necessary for effective cooperation among national, sub-national, and local authorities, especially for Wildlife Enforcement Networks?
- What are some successful examples of partnerships used to deliver competency-building activities, and what made them work?

### Problem

A significant amount of illegal wildlife trade originates in Indonesia. Endangered species – or their parts – are traded nationally and internationally, including pangolins, tigers, rhinos, elephants, helmeted hornbills, orangutans, manta rays, and many more. Unfortunately, law enforcement officers' ability to detect and gather intelligence, conduct sting operations, and provide strong legal documentation are not enough to stop traffickers. The large geographic area that the limited number of officers are expected to cover further constrains their ability to reduce the scale of wildlife trafficking in Indonesia.

## Approach

Investigators gather wildlife poaching and trafficking information, providing accurate intelligence reports to law enforcement officers for sting operations. Using IBM i2 software to analyze suspects' cellphones and criminal history, the Wildlife Crimes Unit provides intelligence analysis to help detect criminal networks. Legal counsel provides technical assistance to police and civil investigators preparing legal documents for cases. To ensure the judicial system is providing fair sentences that deter future wildlife crimes, these lawyers: provide information on relevant regulations, offer scientific evidence,



A large seizure of illegally trafficked pangolins.

monitor officers, serve as facilitators for collaboration between agencies, and conduct court monitoring.

The Unit works to increase relevant knowledge and skills of police, forest rangers, prosecutors, and judges through a series of trainings. Materials include case studies of wildlife trafficking, common practices and operations, species identification, forensics, cyber patrol, and maintaining chains of custody.

The Wildlife Crimes Unit also maintains relationships with journalists to raise public awareness. The Wildlife Crimes Unit provides various stories to the media, resulting in a [large number of published stories](#) each year.

## Results

To date, more than 30 middlemen involved in the trafficking of tiger, elephant, helmeted hornbill, pangolin, and shark and rays have been arrested. Other key actions and results of the Unit include:

- Support for London Metropolitan Police efforts to prosecute an animal parts smuggler in Surabaya, and support for Australian Federal Police in the investigation and arrest of an international reptile smuggler in Jakarta.
- Provision of targeted intelligence packages to German police and Malagasy authorities for a case related to reptile and tortoise trafficking.
- Use of i2 analysis to target suspects to dismantle 70% of the tiger crime networks in the Leuser landscape (Sumatra) and Java and 30% of the manta and shark networks in Eastern Indonesia.
- Support for more than half of the wildlife crime cases in Indonesia since 2012.
- Training of more than 100 prosecutors in 2016, 20% of whom now handle various wildlife crime cases.
- Publishing of more than 600 articles by national and international media about the Wildlife Crimes Unit's work in 2016.

**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

- **Involving civil society from multiple professional disciplines complements government efforts to address wildlife trafficking and increase trust.** Providing intelligence information, assisting in sting operations, supporting day-to-day assistance to complete court paperwork, and working with journalists are crucial components to support government efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Providing good technical assistance builds trust and creates a mutual partnership.
- **Identifying wildlife champions among law enforcement officers and providing them with the technical support they need to do their jobs is important.** WCS motivates wildlife champions by involving them in training, informing them of relevant intelligence, or involving them in joint sting operations with other agencies. Encouraging wildlife heroes can catalyze change in their internal agencies, potentially overcoming complicated bureaucracy, weak commitment, and corruption.
- **Recognize the differences among trafficking networks.** The Unit realized that wildlife trafficking in Indonesia is operated by both organized criminal groups and organized crime families. Organized criminal groups consist of various ethnicities and families who are supported by wealthy financiers, avoid confrontation with competition, and actively recruit and expand their networks. Organized crime families consist of a specific family or members of a particular ethnic group who establish monopolies over their area of crime and use violence to maintain their business.
- **Lack of domestic and international intelligence data hinders government response to wildlife trafficking.** Providing high-quality intelligence reports and analysis may both help government response and increase trust and confidence in partners.

To learn more about the WCS Wildlife Crimes Unit, visit: <https://www.wcs.org/our-work/solutions/illegal-wildlife-trade>