



# Zoological Society of London in Nepal

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## Learning Questions Addressed:

- What are examples of institutional arrangements, such as dedicated units or embed programs, that improved the capacity of enforcement or prosecution staff?
- What are some successful examples of partnerships used to deliver competency-building activities, and what made them work?

The Government of Nepal has supported community rights over natural resources by devolving management rights of one-third of the nation's forests. With four years of zero rhino poaching occurring between 2011 and 2017, Nepal is considered a model for the community management of forests. The country is home to more than 18,000 Community Forest User Groups that have contributed to the increase of forest cover. USAID has been a strong partner to the Government of Nepal by supporting community-based approaches to conservation through projects like [WWF's Hariyo Ban](#).

## Summary

In Nepal, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) works to build and strengthen enforcement capacity and coordination to combat wildlife trafficking through a series of nested partnerships with government (the Department of Forests and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation), non-governmental organizations (the National Trust for Nature Conservation and Himalayan Nature), and local communities. This approach supports targeted policy interventions and innovative conservation technology as well as the development of Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units, anti-poaching Rapid Response Units, and the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) approach to protected area management and patrol-based monitoring.

## Problem

ZSL worked closely with Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation to identify gaps in wildlife law enforcement capacity. Together, they identified three specific gaps and a wider need to improve coordination. First, outside of patrolled protected areas, the capacity to identify and respond to poaching was limited. Second, within protected areas, patrolling was often partial, with uneven coverage in time and space and a lack of prioritization and adaptability. The final gap was an inability to respond to identified poaching events in real time, either to prevent them or to apprehend perpetrators. Beyond these specific gaps was a wider need to enhance the communication of vital information across levels and actors combating wildlife trafficking.

## Approach

Each of the three main interventions tackles a capacity gap in Nepal's management of protected areas. Together, they form a well-coordinated system that responds to poaching threats. To remedy a lack of anti-poaching capacity outside of formally patrolled protected areas, ZSL established and



A member of ZSL-Nepal technical team conducts a field training.

supports Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units. These units are made up of community members who regularly patrol local patches of forest and have observations from patrols to protected area authorities.

To ensure effective coverage and targeting of protected area patrols and to enable flexibility in the face of changing and emerging threats, ZSL trains protected area staff in the SMART approach and helps institutionalize it at senior levels. The

SMART approach keeps detailed patrol records that call attention to gaps in patrolling and encourages a culture of adaptive management.

Information that is collected is also made readily available at other levels and informs the work of anti-poaching Rapid Response Units, staffed by existing protected area staff who are equipped and trained by ZSL. Rapid Response Units are able to quickly arrive at the scene of potential wildlife crimes by using innovative technology such as cameras enabled with the global system for mobile communication, information from communities and SMART patrols, and the latest forensic and evidence handling techniques. This allows them to prevent the poaching incidents from occurring or deal with them appropriately to maximize the chance of apprehending the perpetrators.

## Results

Nepal has achieved four years of zero rhino poaching, demonstrating the impact of close partnerships committed to combating wildlife trafficking. The SMART approach has been adopted across over 1,000km<sup>2</sup>, with two protected areas regularly analyzing SMART data to understand threats and adaptively respond. This has resulted in over 70 arrests, nine poaching traps confiscated, 22 weapons seized, and at least three poaching camps destroyed in 2016-2017. Rapid Response Units have made 16 arrests and two wildlife rescues. ZSL also initiated an insurance policy, covering 372 frontline staff in 2017, which the government has adopted and is now initiating with all frontline staff in the country, including protected areas in the mountains. At the same time, there are 34 operational Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units, with each feeding valuable information into the wider system to combat wildlife trafficking and engaging communities in combating wildlife trafficking and conservation more generally. These Units have resulted in a remarkable improvement in coordination and communication between protected areas and communities.

*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

- **A range of partnerships that provide both a diversity of skills and access to institutional levers is important for effective capacity building.** The army, police force, local and national government, non-government organizations, and local communities are all key partners in capacity building. This enables knowledge exchange, creates opportunities to improve coordination, and enables active participation in program design and implementation.
- **Technology should be appropriate for the user and supported by proper training.** Providing technological solutions such as communication devices and remote camera networks can be a critical component of capacity building, but requires appropriate training to be provided alongside it.
- **Ensure new skills become institutionally embedded and not lost through staff turnover.** ZSL conducts training-of-trainers and refresher trainings to help ensure the continuity of vital skills and high motivation among frontline staff. Training should be evaluated to confirm that information is retained.
- **Dedicated units with specific responsibilities and good coordination can increase effectiveness through the division of responsibilities.** ZSL has experienced great success in developing dedicated units with specific responsibilities that are based in specific organizations or constituencies. These have both provided a basis to improve coordination and communication between groups and enabled a division of responsibilities and skills that supports greater efficiency and effectiveness.

To learn more about ZSL, visit: <https://www.zsl.org>