

CONNECTing Wildlife and Wild Meat

USAID CONSERVING NATURAL CAPITAL AND ENHANCING COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RESOURCES IN EAST AFRICA (CONNECT)

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Activity Summary

Poaching, alongside illegal trade and trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products, remains a significant threat to the iconic biodiversity of East Africa's landscapes. One key driver of poaching is the growing demand and market for commercial wild meat trade. To make matters worse, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout may have caused people in the region to increasingly turn to poaching to replace lost income. Through transboundary efforts and leadership, the East African Community (EAC) aims to provide a framework for more coordinated and targeted anti-poaching strategies in the region. USAID Kenya and East Africa's Conserving Natural Capital and Enhancing Collaborative Management of Transboundary Resources in East Africa (CONNECT) activity has a specific focus on EAC's anti-poaching strategy.

Approach and Implementation

This case study showcases CONNECT's efforts to raise awareness of the economic, intrinsic, and ecosystem-service value of living wildlife and ultimately mitigate poaching for the commercial wild meat market across Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda. Approximately one-third of CONNECT's budget is allocated for work related to wild meat. CONNECT is one of three USAID activities focused on wild meat issues in Tanzania. Together these three activities are addressing various aspects of the system, with CONNECT focusing on monitoring wild meat trade and consumption and promoting awareness and behavior change to reduce demand. For more information on USAID's work in Tanzania please reference the TRAPS Tanzania and Tuhifadhi Maliasili case studies on www.biodiversitylinks.org.

Activity Highlights



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office in collaboration with WWF and TRAFFIC



LOCATION

East Africa - specifically Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda



FUNDING AMOUNT

\$4.9 million



PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

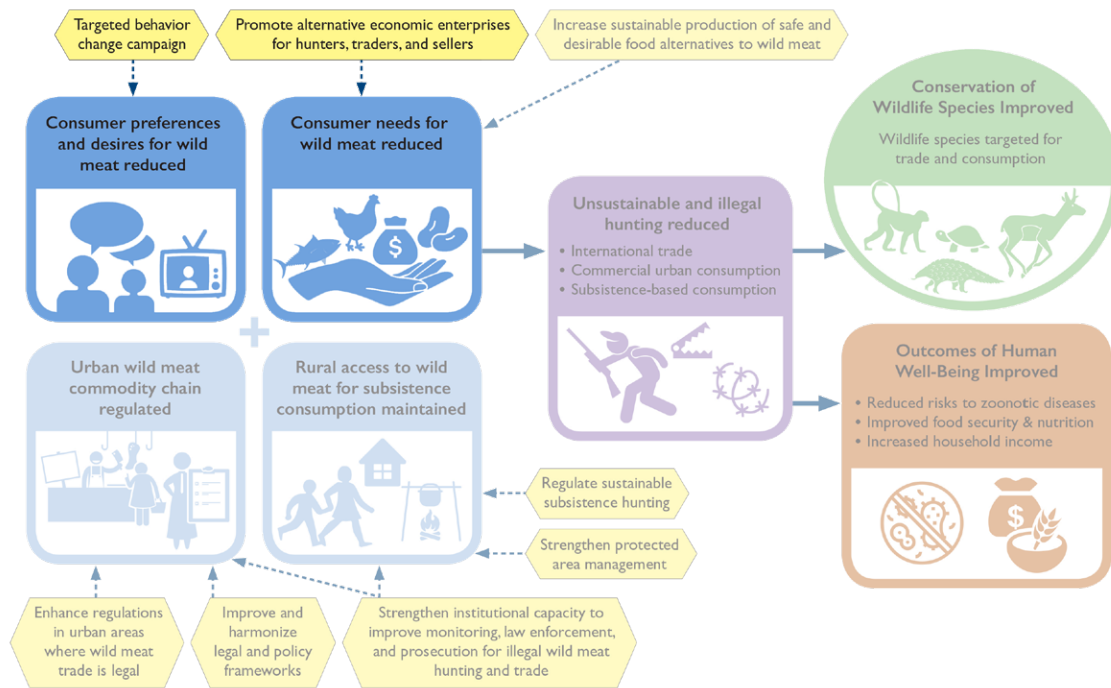
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STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Raise awareness of the economic and intrinsic value of wildlife.
- Strengthen regional policy frameworks for more collaborative transboundary natural resource management.
- Improve the enforcement and prosecution of wildlife crime.

Figure 1: Theory of Change, Consumer Preferences, and Needs



Wild Meat Trade Monitoring

Reducing the unsustainable demand for wild meat requires an understanding of the drivers of consumption. CONNECT’s monitoring approach builds upon a Wildlife Trafficking Response, Assessment, and Priority Setting (Wildlife TRAPS) study, which is used as a baseline for wild meat consumption patterns in the region. CONNECT also draws on other data compiled by TRAFFIC and its partners, who work with local enumerators to survey wild meat traders, community members, and hunters. These data help to better understand the changing preferences and trends of wild meat consumption along the entire value chain,

particularly around protected areas and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CONNECT team used these 2021 data collected by TRAFFIC and its partners, in conjunction with the larger Wildlife TRAPS study, to develop “bushmeat fact sheets,” which were shared with the governments of Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. These fact sheets have already helped to establish an understanding of the findings among these governments, and reinforced the need for demand reduction and targeted messaging on wild meat issues.

Table I. CONNECT Research and Data

Baseline research from the Wildlife TRAPS study shows significant demand for wild meat, whether for food or medicine, among the East Asian diaspora and East Africans. Wild meat is readily available in markets or on demand, and concerns about poaching extend to species targeted for “medicinal” use, such as lion fat and pangolin scales. These data have enabled the CONNECT team to identify different strategies to better target various audiences and their respective demand and uses of wild meat.

Survey data compiled into bushmeat fact sheets show a degree of wild meat availability and consumption across Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. Around 80% of respondents say they have consumed wild meat; of those respondents, around 60% consume wild meat more than once per week. Ungulate species, such as Dik Dik, Kob, and Buffalo, are in highest demand for wild meat. Throughout the region, wild meat appears to be widely available to most respondents at any time and is primarily transported by motorcycle. Wild meat is largely an extra—rather than a primary—source of income for traders. While the survey data is inconclusive whether there was an increase in the frequency of wild meat consumption after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, field observations and anecdotal information point to an increase in wild meat consumption after the pandemic’s onset.

Messaging and Demand Reduction

CONNECT uses the information generated through its monitoring efforts to design wild meat behavior change campaigns. These behavior change and demand reduction campaigns are tailored to the context, targeting specific regions and audiences.

Outreach efforts with media in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda aim to raise people’s awareness of the importance of wild meat issues, the linkages with zoonotic diseases, and other potential implications of the wild meat trade. Through Internews—an international media support nonprofit—CONNECT is building the capacity of regional

journalists to boost reporting and key messaging on wild meat issues and will soon be working through media outlets to roll out behavior change campaigns in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda.

This campaign will provide salient wild meat trade information to journalists, who will then disseminate key messages to the public through targeted media platforms. Media messaging will be tailored to specific audiences based on the focal species and consumption patterns of regional wild meat trade. For example, messaging to address the pangolin and ivory trade in Uganda or sea horses and other protected marine species in Kenya will target the East Asian diaspora.

Indicators and Results

CONNECT Goals and Objectives	Relevant Indicators
Increased awareness of the economic and intrinsic value of living wildlife.	Number of policy briefs on the role and value of wildlife in the economy developed and shared. Number of people reached through awareness campaigns and dissemination of the findings of Wildlife in the Economy study.
Reduced demand for wildlife products.	Number of media and other outreach campaigns focused on wildlife conservation and or demand reduction developed and implemented.



Lessons Learned

Learning Question: What are the barriers and incentives that motivate urban and peri-urban, non-subsistence demand for and consumption of wild meat?

LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND STAFF ARE CRITICAL TO UNDERSTANDING TRENDS IN WILD MEAT CONSUMPTION

CONNECT’s wild meat monitoring work has benefited greatly from its local staff and partners. Traders, community members, and hunters are providing helpful information to build an understanding of what drives wild meat demand as well as the extent of that demand. For example, local partners flagged that they saw wild meat being transported on motorbikes and in vehicles to Mombasa. As a result, Internews brought East African journalists to the Mombasa port to build their awareness about commercial wild meat. The experience gave these journalists a new perspective on the trade’s impact on the region and the importance of covering it. Locally accessible data has also been invaluable, and even greater investment to ensure a reliable flow of good-quality data from local partners would be beneficial.

WILD MEAT IS OFTEN NOT A GOVERNMENT PRIORITY, SO IT MUST BE MESSAGED CAREFULLY

Governments accustomed to priorities of countering wildlife trafficking to protect high-value species often do not believe those priorities encompass the commercial wild meat trade. This poses a challenge when government officials may not want to discuss what they consider a “non-issue.” Careful messaging around wild meat will be critical for ensuring government engagement and buy-in. CONNECT’s messaging for government partners highlighted, for example, that new species of interest— including zebra, giraffe, and multiple marine species—are being extracted at alarming rates and require urgent attention. Further, messaging to government colleagues clarified that CONNECT is not targeting local-level subsistence hunting, but rather middle-level traders and “kingpins” along the wild meat value chain.



Lessons Learned

Learning Question: What behavior change approaches are effective in overcoming these barriers or leveraging these incentives for changing bushmeat demand and consumption behavior?

JOURNALISTS ARE CRITICAL PLAYERS IN RAISING AWARENESS OF WILD MEAT ISSUES

Journalists' and media organizations' wide coverage and networks are key to disseminating wild meat information and successful behavior change campaigns. Engaging with journalists through workshops and other capacity building activities not only enhances those individuals' understanding of wild meat issues, but amplifies wild meat messaging. For example, media messaging reached 2,224,00 people as a result of a one-day workshop with 30 journalists from the Journalists' Environmental Association of Tanzania.

LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS WORK AND OTHER REGIONS ARE TRANSFERABLE

CONNECT used previous research, in particular the foundational Wildlife TRAPS study, to build upon and expand existing evidence, rather than start from scratch. TRAFFIC also incorporated

lessons learned from similar efforts in Asia as it developed behavior change campaign content for East Africa. With continued monitoring and understanding of wild meat consumption patterns in East Africa, CONNECT tailored the campaign as appropriate for the region's context.

FLEXIBLE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES ALLOW FOR STRATEGIC AND ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR CHANGE APPROACHES

Due to the flexible structure of the CONNECT activity, partners can be strategic and nimble in finding synergies with other regional partners. For example, CONNECT partners' work with Internews on a different project provided an unexpected opportunity to tap into the power of the media for the wild meat effort. This collaboration was possible only because the CONNECT work plan included, but did not specify in any detail, a behavior change campaign.



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About this series: In 2022, USAID collected case studies addressing the questions posed in the Wild Meat Learning Agenda. The series looks at USAID-funded activities from around the world. For more information and resources on USAID's Wild Meat Collaborative Learning Group, please visit <https://biodiversitylinks.org/learning-evidence/wild-meat-collaborative-learning-group>. The information provided in the case study series does not necessarily represent the views or positions of USAID or the U.S. Government.