

Press release: UK aid tackles wildlife crime with innovative solutions

The Department for International Development today (Sunday 7th October) launches a major push to find new ways of tackling the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) – providing an additional £6 million to protect some of the world’s most iconic and endangered species including rhinos, elephants and pangolins.

The fresh support will be welcomed by the Prime Minister, who will open the landmark IWT Conference being held in London on 11-12 October, the largest conference ever to be held on this issue.

The illegal wildlife trade threatens species with extinction, fosters corruption, threatens stability and the basic security of societies.

The additional new funding for the IWT Challenge Fund, managed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), will help support the development of cross-border “Green Corridors” for wildlife, by supporting actions that will bring economic and security benefits for communities.

Through efforts to tackle the trade, UK aid is creating sustainable, alternative jobs and working with vulnerable communities, for example, to harness tourism as a driver of economic growth.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The Illegal Wildlife Trade threatens to make some of the planet’s most extraordinary species extinct. It also destroys the livelihoods of some of the world’s poorest people, robbing communities of the great economic benefits of wildlife, including tourism.

UK aid is giving fresh life to projects, whose aim is to protect these species and secure the futures of communities. This is a win for those communities and a win for animal lovers across the world. None of us want to see these majestic animals dying out.

Since 2014, Defra’s Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund has been supporting a range of projects around the world that combat the illegal wildlife trade. This includes addressing the factors which drive demand for the illegal trade. It also includes supporting action to improve law enforcement and bring criminals to justice and to provide alternative jobs for those involved in the trade.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

Environmental challenges do not respect borders, and require coordinated international action.

Our Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund is driving change to combat this despicable criminality and highlights our global leadership in protecting wildlife in its natural environment. The fund's priorities reflect our commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to work with other nations to stamp out this vile trade.

I look forward to the UK welcoming more than 80 nations next week at the fourth international Illegal Wildlife Trade conference in London. This will be the biggest conference ever on tackling the illegal trade and provides a golden opportunity to work together on this vital issue.

The Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund also supports projects which mobilise the private sector, who will be critical in driving economic growth and economic opportunities like nature-tourism that both protect wildlife and reduce poverty.

Projects the Challenge Fund is currently supporting include:

- **Saving Pangolins by Reducing Demand in South East Asia:** This project, led by WildAid will dissuade South East Asian consumers, including in Vietnam, from purchasing pangolin products by debunking the false medicinal value of their scales and making the consumption of pangolin meat socially unacceptable.
- **Developing law enforcement capability in Malawi to combat wildlife crime:** This project, led by RSPCA International with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Malawi, is training Malawian officials and supporting them in investigating and prosecuting wildlife crime. This includes establishing a national database on wildlife crime to allow better and more accurate intelligence gathering.
- **Counter Poaching Training Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa:** This project, led by the Tusk Trust, aims to reduce poaching of rhinos and elephants by significantly improving law enforcement capacity in wildlife protection zones. Training is being provided to rangers, including proven tracking tactics. The project is also providing training in information gathering and analysis to improve coordination of national and international efforts to disrupt poaching and trafficking.

IWT Challenge Fund

The IWT Challenge Fund contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly to: Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development); Goal 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss); and Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production).

Through the IWT Challenge Fund, the UK has so far funded 61 projects with £18.5m to combat the illegal wildlife trade by addressing demand reduction, strengthening enforcement and criminal justice, and providing alternative livelihoods. This includes £4.5 million for 14 new Challenge Fund projects announced in July:

The Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund supports projects looking to tackle IWT through the following actions:

- sustainable livelihoods and economic development, especially by: supporting alternatives to engaging in the illegal wildlife trade; encouraging community-led wildlife conservation, including retention of benefits within local communities; and addressing the challenges of human-wildlife conflict.
- strengthening law enforcement, especially by: addressing corruption; building capacity to prevent illicit financial flows from the illegal wildlife trade; and improving law enforcement and border control in key source, transit and destination countries.
- ensuring effective legal frameworks, especially by: working to ensure that other governments have effective legislation in place; improving judicial prosecution processes in IWT cases; and ensuring there are strong penalties in place for IWT.
- reducing demand for IWT products by: using evidence-based interventions to reduce demand for IWT products; working with businesses to keep IWT products out of the supply chain; establishing partnerships between source, transit and destination countries.

Further information can be found [here](#)

IWT Conference

With over 1,000 delegates, the IWT Conference will be the largest of its kind ever to be held. 84 countries have confirmed that they will be sending delegations, spanning Africa, 26; Americas, 14; Asia and Oceania, 17; Europe, 23 and the Middle East, 4.

The conference will focus on three themes:

1. Tackling IWT as a serious organised crime: strengthening end to end law enforcement.
2. Building coalitions: engaging the private sector, NGOs and academia; harnessing technology and innovation.
3. Closing markets for illegally traded wildlife products: building on the Chinese ivory trade ban.

Wider DFID support

DFID funds a range of activities intended to both tackle the illegal wildlife trade, and to conserve nature and wildlife, including by reducing poverty, strengthening borders and creating green corridors.

£150m for the Global Environment Facility from 2018 to 2022 (as well as £100m from Defra) – this includes the world's biggest fund on tackling IWT, the Global Wildlife Programme, of which the UK has contributed \$17m (approximate £13m) during the same period.