**Horn of Africa Wildlife Crime Programme (WLCP)**

The Horn of Africa is emerging as a major region for wildlife crime worldwide, both as a source and a transit route for illicit wildlife products and live animals. Over the last decade, the volume of traffic and value of illegal products has increased, with major trade routes going through the Arabian Peninsula and to the Far East. The illegal trafficking of wildlife and their products has clear links with organised crime syndicates that are trans-national in nature.

Against that background, the Wildlife Crime (WLC) Protection Programme was jointly developed and formulated by the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network (HoA-REC&N), the South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO), International Foundation for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).  The programme mainly aims at building a comprehensive knowledge and information system on wildlife resources and wildlife crime in the Horn of Africa. It targets 6 countries: South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan.

HoA-REC&N is the main implementing partner in the Horn of Africa while, SORALO, a member of the Horn of Africa Regional Network from Kenya, was selected to strengthen community engagement in the South Rift Landscape. IFAW is the key partner for the law enforcement component, whereas IUCN (Netherlands) is the lead organisation and contracting party from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The inception period of WLC started in January 2016, lasting five months. During this period partners became acquainted with each other, activities were, and key milestones were set for the WLC programme based on the wildlife crime prevention theory of change.

In June 2016, the partners held a strategic meeting at HoA-REC&N’s Headquarters, which was attended by a representative of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other partners involved in efforts to address wildlife crime in the Horn of Africa.

**Activities and Achievements**

A key component of the WLC prevention programme is the community engagement in the fight against wildlife crime. Currently, a community wildlife crime prevention pilot programme is being piloted in the critical corridor of the Masai Mara-Amboseli Ecosystem. The programme is spearheaded by the South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO). There are on-going discussions with Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority to have a second community pilot programme in the Gambella landscape, targeting communities neighbouring Gambella National Park, which will have a strong trans-boundary dimension with Boma National Park in South Sudan.

Involving local communities in wildlife crime law enforcement interventions against illegal wildlife trade is based on the fact that local people are often implicated in poaching because of their proximity to wildlife and their local knowledge. It is for these same reasons that they are also uniquely placed to support and participate in law enforcement efforts as the first lines of defence, and become the eyes and ears of enforcement agencies. Hence, they contribute hugely to the fight against wildlife crime and protection of their resources.

The law enforcement component and the coordinated border operations among countries is implemented by International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) regional programme. Capacity building programs for law enforcement officials, wildlife officials, judiciary and customs to strengthen their effort in the fight against wildlife crime has been conducted in Uganda and Ethiopia so far. Other training programs are planned for the other countries that were not included in the first phase. It is important to note that success in addressing wildlife crime hinges on knowledgeable officials who are able to form linkages, coordinate and network, not only across departments, but also across national borders and continents.

**WLC’s role in HAWEN**

Another critical component of the WLC prevention programme is the support to actions and processes that will lead to the establishment of Horn of Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (HAWEN) secretariat at IGAD. In order to realize coordinated effort among seven countries of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda) to fight wildlife trafficking collaboratively, HAWEN was initiated during a meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2012.

The initiative resulted in the establishment of a steering committee with representatives from each participating country, and regional organisations such as IGAD and HoA-REC&N, to guide the process of realising HAWEN. HAWEN would provide a platform for countries in the Horn to improve, amongst others, information sharing, law enforcement, monitoring and intelligence gathering, joint capacity development on wildlife crime investigation and evidence handling up to conclusive legal prosecution.

To strengthen HAWEN as a coordination centre for efforts aimed at combating wildlife crime in the region, the member countries agreed to have HAWEN secretariat established at the IGAD headquarters. This request was agreed by IGAD in May 2013. One of the outcomes of the wildlife crime programme is to facilitate a process leading to the realisation of this dream.

In the long-term, it is hoped that the implementation of WLC this programme will result in the following impacts:

1. Decreased wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade in the Horn of Africa due to more effective law enforcement on the ground and at country borders;
2. Populations of threatened wildlife species preserved and recovered (e.g. elephants and rhinoceroses);
3. Relevant local communities actively involved in preventing and combating wildlife crime and acting as responsible stewards of wildlife resources

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