

Evaluation of GEF Support to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade



Illegal wildlife trade has become one of the leading global threats to biodiversity—and one of the GEF’s primary targets for eradication.

Rhinos and elephants, tigers and jaguars—these and scores of less charismatic species have become the currency in a multibillion-dollar black market now decimating wildlife the world over. The Global Wildlife Program, launched in 2015, is the GEF’s first concerted effort to address illegal wildlife trade in a coordinated and comprehensive way. This evaluation summarizes the findings from the formative review of the GWP’s IWT-related activities to inform future GEF interventions in this area.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The GWP is relevant to GEF-6 biodiversity strategy priorities, as well as those of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The GWP aims to prevent the extinction of threatened species by reducing poaching. It also serves other biodiversity programs and objectives, such as those related to protected areas, sustainable use and

biodiversity mainstreaming, land degradation, climate change, and sustainable forest management.

2. The GWP is a relevant and necessary response in addressing IWT, but gaps in geographic and species coverage remain; the focus is mainly on single-country projects.

No countries from Latin America or the Caribbean have been included in the GWP so far, even though IWT occurs within the region. And while all the child projects under the GWP are for single countries, IWT is by nature international, thus dictating cross-boundary strategies.

3. The GWP has a comprehensive strategy to address IWT, from source to market, but most GWP funding is focused on addressing IWT at its source. This skewed allocation of GEF funds reflects a program largely composed of participating countries’ priorities.

PURPOSE AND METHODS: This assessment is based on desk reviews and interviews with key sources, including experts associated with the Global Environment Facility’s (GEF’s) Global Wildlife Program (GWP) and with other officials at governmental institutions, implementing Agencies, and nongovernmental organizations engaged in combating illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

WEB PAGE: www.gefio.org/evaluations/biodiversity-bd-focal-area-study-2017

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“ **Illegal wildlife trade has wide-ranging implications, from biodiversity conservation to transnational crime. Dealing with this takes a multipronged approach, and the GEF’s current efforts are a good starting point.** ” —Anupam Anand, IEO Evaluation Officer

4. The current funding mechanism limits the extent to which GWP child projects can be expected to fully realize the program framework document.

Most of the funding available for child projects under the program is from the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR), which provides minimal GEF leverage in directing funds to the program.

5. Political will and corruption are not explicitly addressed.

Eleven of the 20 country-specific projects describe corruption as an issue, but only 6 projects mention anti-corruption measures as part of their objectives.

6. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for IWT child projects is simplified and more relevant to the GWP than those applied to other GEF programs.

But it is not clear whether this simplified M&E framework will be able to capture the uniqueness of the child projects as well as overall program accomplishments.

7. The GWP global coordination grant is accomplishing more than expected, despite limited funding.

The global grant, which addresses IWT issues across the entire supply chain, receives only 5 percent of total GWP funding. However, the sustainability of knowledge-sharing components needs to be established by fostering connections between experts, in-country staff, and implementing Agency technical staff, to enable the continual improvement of the projects at the ground level.

BACKGROUND

IWT is one of the leading global threats to biodiversity. About 350 million plants and animals are sold on the black market annually, with an estimated value of \$7 billion to \$23 billion. The trade in certain charismatic species has skyrocketed in the 21st century. Between 2007 and 2014, the African savanna elephant population declined by nearly a third, due largely to poaching for their ivory tusks. In South Africa, the number of rhinos killed for their horns rose from about 10 per year a decade ago to more than 1,000 per year today.

IWT is driven, in large part, by growing demand from expanding economies in Asia. The declines are also driven by increased poaching due to poverty and the absence of more sustainable livelihoods. IWT is facilitated by transnational criminal networks, which also trade illegally in timber, weapons, drugs, and humans.

In answer to this ongoing crisis, the GEF began a concerted effort to fund activities addressing IWT. To further coordinate these efforts, the Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development (known as the Global Wildlife Program) was developed during GEF-6. Designed to be implemented over a period of seven years, the \$131 million GWP aims to address supply, trafficking, and demand of illegal wildlife products through 20 child projects in Asia and Africa, including one global coordination and knowledge management grant.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Relevance to GEF-6 biodiversity strategy priorities. By reducing the poaching of rhinos, elephants, and other species—and by increasing the arrests and convictions of poachers within participating countries—the GWP aims to prevent the extinction of threatened species. Eighteen of 20 country-specific child projects include conservation of elephants and rhinos, aligning well with Program 3 of the GEF-6 biodiversity strategy.

2. Tightening focus on IWT. The GWP is evolving from a set of projects focused largely on biodiversity and conservation to projects more directly addressing IWT. Nevertheless, there remain competing visions for the scope and focus of the program. Key informants advocated for a broader focus on threats to wildlife, while others advocated for addressing IWT more directly. Still others argued that the GEF should promote better law enforcement as a stronger tack for reducing IWT than the fostering of alternative livelihoods for poachers.

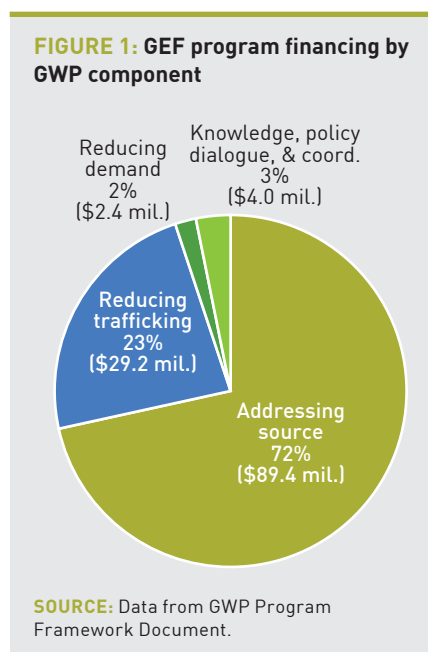
3. Theory of change. The GWP follows a comprehensive theory of change to address IWT. The theory, set out in the GWP’s program framework document, emphasizes addressing each stage in the IWT supply chain—namely, the source of wildlife traded illegally, the shipment and transportation of wildlife and wildlife products, and the market demand for those products.

4. Limits of funding. Most of the funding available for child projects under the GWP is from STAR allocations. While the STAR is effective in ensuring that country recipients have adequate buy-in with respect to their illegal wildlife issues, it is constrained by the lack of leverage it provides the GEF to direct funding to the program. Moreover, combating IWT entails cross-boundary coordination, which requires countries to collaborate at a regional scale.

5. Focus on source. Most GWP funding—72 percent—is focused on fighting IWT at the source (figure 1). Trafficking and demand—the two other IWT dimensions embodied in the theory of change—receive 23 percent and 2 percent of the funding, respectively. While Africa and Asia constitute the major source of IWT, the European Union (EU)—which is not covered by the GWP—serves as an important conduit between them. Demand for illegal wildlife is substantially driven by Asia, with EU countries and the United States also serving as major market hubs, but efforts at curtailing demand receive the smallest portion of funding.

6. Missing countries and species.

Gaps remain in the GWP's geographic and species coverage (figure 2). For example, no countries from Latin America and the Caribbean region have been included so far, even though substantial IWT occurs there. The gaps in coverage reflect the fact that the GWP



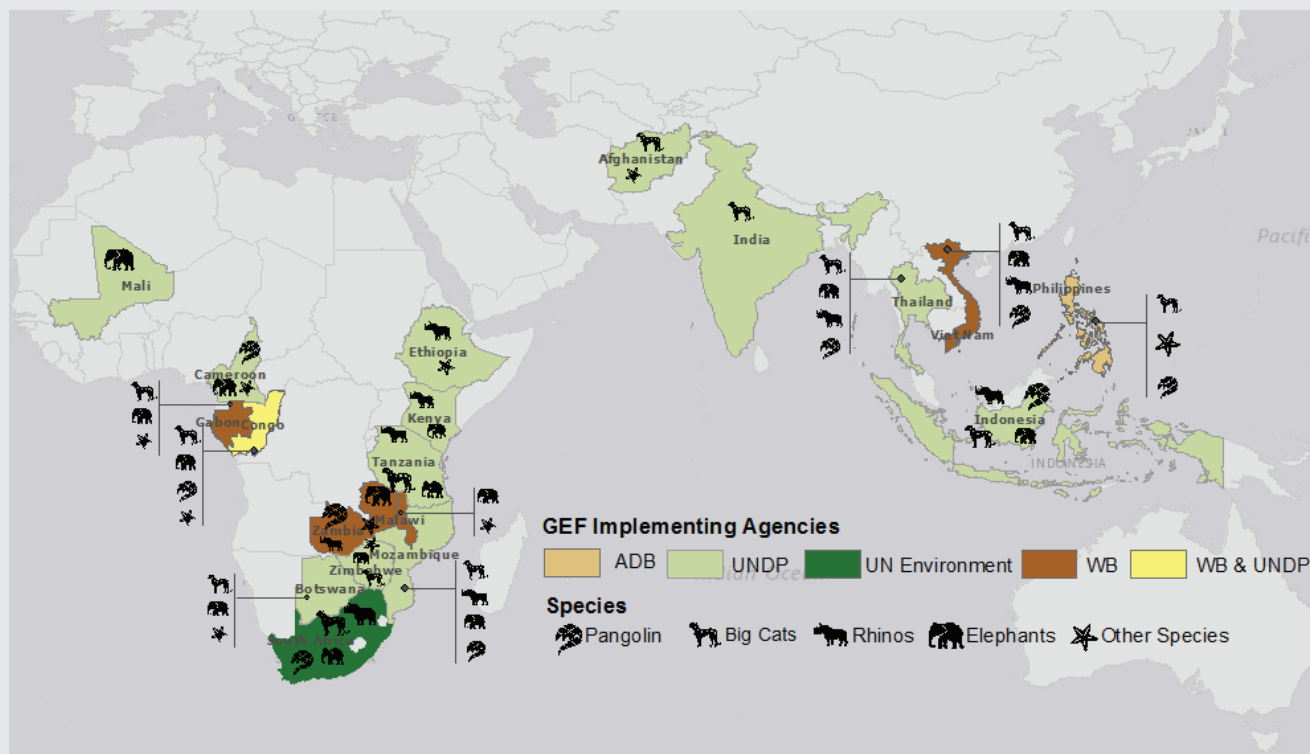
emerged from concerns for the plight of charismatic African and Asian mega-fauna—specifically, the recent spike in trafficking of elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, and large cats.

7. Rangers in need. Those engaged in high-risk, on-the-ground efforts to protect wildlife from poaching are not being well served. Many rangers—some 45 percent of those surveyed in African and Asian countries—lack adequate training, with large proportions also reporting a lack of necessities as basic as boots.

8. An international issue. IWT is by nature an international, cross-boundary issue. Yet, with the exception of the global coordination grant, all the child projects under the GWP are based on single countries. And more than 90 percent of GWP funding for anti-trafficking activities consists of country-specific child projects.

9. Good performance of the global grant. The GWP global coordination grant receives only 5 percent of total GWP funding. Nonetheless, the activities undertaken by the global grant—to facilitate cooperation and knowledge exchange, foster interagency cooperation, and disseminate good practices

FIGURE 2: Countries and iconic species addressed by the GWP



NOTE: The representation of political boundaries does not necessarily reflect the position of the GEF IEO on international issues of recognition, sovereignty, and/or jurisdiction.

and lessons—have been uniformly praised by informants familiar with the work based on their efficiency, relevance, accessibility, and helpfulness.

10. M&E is simple but effective. The program's M&E framework is limited to three key measures, which enumerate law enforcement and judicial activities, people supported by GWP activities, and target species poached. Respondents praised this system for having “fewer hoops to jump through.”

11. Political will and corruption overlooked. IWT is integrally linked to a country's political will to combat it, and to the corruption that would promote it. Yet neither is explicitly addressed in its projects. Eleven of the 20 country-specific projects describe corruption as a problem, but only 6 mention anti-corruption measures as part of their objectives, with Gabon being the only country to explicitly do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ongoing IWT crisis warrants scaling-up of GEF's work in combating IWT. As an intergovernmental organization with an established track record in addressing a range of biodiversity-related issues, the GEF has distinct advantages in combating IWT. Scaling up the GEF's work requires increased funding under the GEF-7 replenishment cycle and a sharper focus on IWT.

2. The GEF's IWT strategy needs better integration of bottom-up, country-driven approaches, with top-down, strategic approaches.

Adjustments to the funding mechanism for GEF IWT activities—e.g., supporting programs with non-STAR funds—could facilitate integration of these approaches.

3. The scope of the GEF's IWT funding should be strategically expanded to other species, countries, and regions. Specifically, the program should expand to cover Latin America and the Caribbean, a region that poses particular issues with respect to the pet trade.

4. In addition to national projects, stronger regional and global programming is warranted. Because IWT is ultimately an international issue, the program can be made more cohesive if cross-border connections are designed as a core part of the program. This could be achieved by supporting activities across international borders with non-STAR resources.

5. Political will and corruption should be explicitly and directly addressed in all IWT projects. A coordinated focus on political will and corruption will ultimately help increase the arrests, prosecutions, and convictions that the GEF-6 biodiversity strategy prescribes. Participating

countries in future GEF-funded projects on IWT should be encouraged to invest money in addressing corruption. Alternatively, the GEF could support third parties (such as the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime) to engage countries to pursue this part of the agenda.

6. Continue to use the simplified measures for tracking overall GWP performance while reflecting the uniqueness of child projects. M&E of all IWT projects should include the tracking of arrests, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties as appropriate. Collecting data for these subindicators for all projects would enable a more thorough assessment of the effectiveness of the projects, as well as the impact of corruption and political will on efforts to combat IWT.

7. Create links between other international activities regarding illegal wildlife demand and GEF-supported efforts. The United States and Europe, though they are not eligible GEF recipients, are critical sources of demand for illegal wildlife. While outside the scope of the GEF's activities, their role must be acknowledged in working to solve this global problem. ■

