



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



FINANCIAL FLOWS from WILDLIFE CRIME



**COMBATING
WILDLIFE AND FOREST CRIME**

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME



ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING

The illegal exploitation of the world's wild flora and fauna is a serious and growing problem globally. It impacts negatively on economic and social development, security and governance. Wildlife and forest crime has all the hallmarks of transnational organized crime and is frequently linked to other forms of serious crime such as fraud, corruption and money laundering. It creates huge criminal profits.

Transnational organized criminal networks are moving poached or illegally harvested wildlife and illegal timber using a variety of smuggling techniques, often by means of existing infrastructures and well-developed routes used for the trafficking of drugs, people, weapons, and other forms of contraband. The vast profits these crimes generate have to be laundered and moved across borders for the criminals to benefit.

Anti-money laundering techniques can target these proceeds, identifying suspicious transactions in the regulated sector and preventing the smuggling of bulk cash across borders.

Yet in spite of the devastation caused, wildlife and forest crime continues to be viewed as being outside 'mainstream crime' by many in the law enforcement community, Governments and the public, and cutting edge investigative techniques often employed in tackling other criminal investigations such as fraud and the trafficking in drugs and people are rarely employed. The use of financial and money laundering investigative techniques can substantially enhance wildlife and forest crime investigations. It will usually achieve three objectives:

1. Financial investigations will often identify other members of the criminal network;

2. It will identify the profit from these crimes (the criminal proceeds) allowing seizure and confiscation; and
3. It will provide additional evidence to support the predicate offence.

Wildlife and forest crime creates huge profits which now need to be targeted. By using the concept of 'following the money' investigators can target the financial flows, identifying additional members of organized criminal gangs, taking away the profit from these kinds of crime and in doing so, reduce the reinvestment in crime. Now is the time to start following the money and reach out to all relevant partners including Financial Intelligence Units, the regulated sector, in particular the financial institutions, and the customs services protecting borders from bulk cash smuggling.

Taking the profit from crime

Every time a seizure of fresh ivory, rhino horn, or timber is made, it is too late. The animal is dead or the forest has been logged. Therefore, part of UNODC's response to wildlife and forest crime is to tackle the financial flows targeting the way in which the organized criminal gangs pay the operational costs of poaching or illegal logging or cover the costs of shipping and transportation. The profits from these crimes have to move across borders and continents and so by bringing together law enforcement, financial intelligence units and the private sector (in particular financial institu-

TRACING and WILDLIFE CRIME

Following the money

tions), investigations can meet with greater success. Therefore, it is recommended that one should:

1. Always think about a financial profile when questioning couriers and suspects;
2. Examine how the shipment was paid for;
3. Work with FIUs and other partners both at home and abroad; and
4. Work with the financial sector to identify indicators for suspicious transactions by:
 - Identifying opportunities to enhance the relationships between wildlife and forest crime investigators and officials in both public and private sectors involved in the transportation of wildlife or forest products (such as customs authorities, port authorities, airlines, shipping companies, financial intelligence units and financial institutions); and
 - Routinely carrying out financial investigations to follow the money trail.



Certain United Nations Conventions and the Financial Action Task Force international recommendations provide the guidance and the framework to conduct financial investigations alongside the predicate crime including wildlife and timber, to prosecute money laundering offences, and to seize the proceeds of crime. These provisions can be used to target the financial flows from wildlife and forest crime.



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This is our shared planet.
Tackling wildlife and forest crime
is our shared responsibility.

Photos: Thomas Hawk, UNODC, Sigrid Ekman

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