



ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND 2019 MID-YEAR REPORT



Overview

This year has seen significant progress in addressing the ivory crisis that continues to threaten Africa's elephants. High-level wildlife traffickers have largely escaped justice until now, but in the first six months of 2019 **several significant arrests** were made which are likely to lead to disruption and perhaps even dismantling of major transnational trafficking networks.

The **Chinese government has shown remarkable energy** in enforcing the closure of their ivory markets, a positive sign despite the large amounts of ivory that continue to flow there. Other Southeast Asian countries, especially Vietnam and Laos, have emerged as important hubs for the ivory trade, and our efforts and partnerships are shifting in response.

There was an **exceptionally large number of seizures** of illegal ivory in the first half of 2019. These seizures alone account for about 5,000 dead elephants, and there is much more ivory that has passed through without being detected by law enforcement authorities. Such large seizures may be a sign of more effective law enforcement, that elephant poaching is still continuing at a high rate, or that old ivory stocks are being dumped into the market. In any case, it means that the ivory trade continues and that demand for illegal ivory endures. The task of disrupting and dismantling these networks continues to be a top priority for ECF funding alongside the longer-term goal of reducing demand for ivory.

Poaching is coming under control in many countries in Southern and Eastern Africa, but there seems to be **no let-up in the level of killing in the forests of Central Africa** and there are worrying signs of an increase in Botswana, home to Africa's largest elephant population. One encouraging bit of news is the recent sighting of an elephant in Sudan—the first confirmed sighting in that country for perhaps fifty years.

SUCCESSSES

- Major ivory trafficking suspects have been arrested in several countries following investigations headed by US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Elephant poaching has reduced in a number of the areas supported by ECF grantees, including Niassa National Reserve (Mozambique), Garamba National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo), and in several parks in Zambia.
- There is increased engagement by Chinese law enforcement agencies and cooperation with NGOs working to stop the ivory trade.
- New partnerships have been established for anti-trafficking work in Southeast Asia.
- Most public ivory sales outlets in Laos and Myanmar have now closed.

CHALLENGES

- High levels of poaching in Central Africa continue.
- A suspect in another high-level trafficking case in Kenya was acquitted because of flaws in the prosecution case.
- Large volumes of ivory continue to flow from Africa to Asia.
- The ivory trade has been displaced to Southeast Asian countries with low law enforcement capacity.
- There remains a lack of understanding of how the ivory trade now operates in Southeast Asia.



THE ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

The ongoing elephant poaching crisis in Africa is driven by a complex, international ivory trade that thrives on poverty, insecurity, organized crime, corruption, and greed. To tackle this critical issue head on, Save the Elephants and the Wildlife Conservation Network created the Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF).

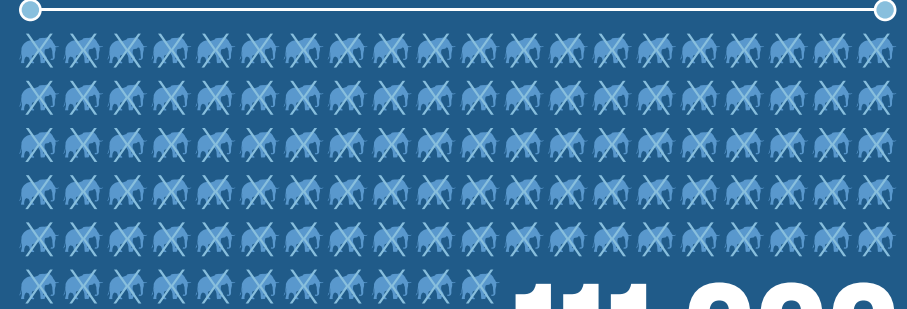
The ECF works with a coalition of individuals, scientists, conservation organizations and governments to stop the killing of elephants, prevent ivory from reaching markets, and reduce the profitability of the trade in ivory products.

The ECF supports the best initiatives in need of funds regardless of where they come from. The organizations able to make the most impact, whether they are tiny local NGOs or larger multinational institutions, get our support. A team of experts works to ensure strategic and effective allocation of the funds generously provided by our donors. The ECF is able to respond quickly and with minimal bureaucracy, deploying funds in as little as 24 hours when necessary. Uniquely, 100% of funds are used to support on-the-ground programs that save elephants—not a single cent goes to administrative fees or overhead.

The organizations able to make the most impact, whether they are tiny local NGOs or larger multinational institutions, get our support.

In six years, the ECF has deployed \$20 million to the best efforts to save elephants and end the ivory crisis, and is aiming to raise and deploy another \$30 million by 2023. With poaching, trafficking, and demand for ivory still at unsustainable levels, the ECF will not stop until the crisis has ended, and elephant populations across Africa are no longer under threat.

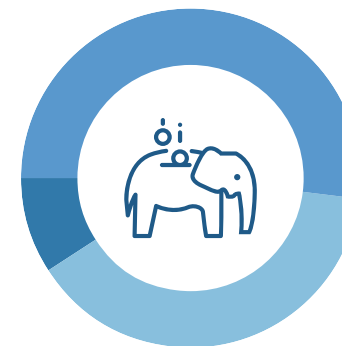
2007 Reduction in Africa's elephant population. 2015



255 Projects supported by the ECF since it started.

75 Organizations receiving grants from the ECF to date.

36 Countries with ECF investments.



53% Of funding allocated to ANTI-POACHING PROJECTS.

38% Of funding allocated to ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROJECTS.

9% Of funding allocated to DEMAND REDUCTION PROJECTS.

\$20 Million

USD Granted to STOP THE KILLING OF ELEPHANTS and STOP THE TRAFFICKING and DEMAND FOR THEIR IVORY.

0%

Of your donation going to ADMINISTRATIVE FEES OR OVERHEAD.

Anti-Poaching Update

The 2018 poaching figures from sites supported by the ECF have provided some good news. In Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, home to what was one of the most threatened elephant populations in Africa, the ECF has been funding the intelligence system that is an essential pillar of effective law enforcement. African Parks reported that poaching in Garamba reduced from 91 elephants in 2016 to 50 in 2017 to only three in 2018. This shows that, even in the most difficult environments, it is possible to protect elephants given adequate resources, a clear mandate, effective personnel, and sufficient will.

In Niassa National Reserve in northern Mozambique, which has suffered greatly from elephant poaching, the ECF supported the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) with the operating costs of a helicopter during the wet season, when poaching is usually most intense, and with an upgraded radio system. Following the President of Mozambique's visit to Niassa in late 2018, and subsequent deployment of a special police force and the mobilization of the helicopter, WCS has reported that **no elephants are known to have been killed since May 2018**. While this outcome is encouraging, we believe the situation remains precarious and we are keenly aware of how continued efforts are needed to sustain this success.



ECF funds have allowed essential upgrades to the radio network within Niassa National Reserve in Mozambique.
© Frank af Petersens

In Zambia, which is still exposed to heavy poaching pressure, our partners Frankfurt Zoological Society, Conservation Lower Zambezi, and Conservation South Luangwa all report a **substantial decrease in poaching levels** from 2017 to 2018, which is being continued into 2019.

Central Africa continues to be the worst area for elephant poaching. In vast forests, remote from roads and patrol bases, law enforcement personnel are at a severe disadvantage compared to poachers. There are only a few well-managed strongholds where we can expect elephants to survive in any numbers if resources for anti-poaching efforts are not greatly enhanced in other areas. There is worrying evidence of an increased poaching threat for the iconic forest elephant population in the Dzanga Sangha complex in the Central African Republic: the ECF is therefore increasing support to this area. Additionally, Odzala-Kokoua National Park in Congo continues to be under pressure, and the ECF is supporting the construction of two new sub-headquarters there to improve patrolling efficiency throughout the park.



The swamps and dense rainforests of Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the heart of the Congo basin, managed by ECF partner African Parks in a public-private partnership with the Congolese government.
© Scott Ramsay

The small remnant elephant populations of West Africa are also facing real challenges.

The desert elephants of Gourma in Mali struggle to survive in the heart of the Islamist insurgency in the Sahel. Following the disruptions to the army's anti-poaching unit in mid-2018, during which time an additional 13 elephants out of a perilously small elephant population were poached, the situation was stabilized towards the end of the year. This improvement was due in large part to the appointment of new personnel and renewed mentoring by Chengeta Wildlife, working with The WILD Foundation's Mali Elephant Project. There have been no further reports of poaching since October 2018. The ECF continues to provide emergency support for the Gourma elephants.

The Islamist disturbances in the Sahel continue to expand to neighboring countries. Conservation Justice's ECF-supported anti-poaching patrols in the Arly region of Burkina Faso are threatened by attacks on nearby law enforcement bases. This is a major concern since the overwhelming majority of West Africa's surviving elephants live in the

trans-frontier Parc W-Arly-Pendjari complex between Burkina Faso, Niger, and Benin.

One piece of good news came from a PAMS Foundation scoping trip to Côte d'Ivoire, which has lost the vast majority of its elephants in the wake of a civil war, massive deforestation, and the destruction of many protected areas by illegal cocoa farmers. Despite these challenges, the two most viable (though still small) elephant populations have survived almost intact. Additionally, government officials there have shown a positive attitude towards protecting elephants, giving us **hope that the situation in Côte d'Ivoire will continue to improve**. Most excitingly, one forest reserve that was almost entirely destroyed by cocoa farmers, has undergone a significant change for the better. The cocoa farmers left the area, which allowed the forests to start recovering. A few elephants, who had become refugees living in tiny patches of vegetation surrounded by farms, returned to the forest, and local villagers reported that the level of conflict with elephants had reduced.

Anti-Trafficking Update

A number of major ivory traffickers were arrested in different countries in May and June 2019, leading to the likely disruption and perhaps even dismantling of major trafficking networks. The most significant of these arrests were made by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration, working with local law enforcement agencies and conservation partners, after complex investigations lasting more than three years. One suspect was arrested in Uganda and flown to New York for prosecution, while another is under arrest in Senegal, and two more are on the run. The indictment alleges conspiracy to smuggle at least 190 kilograms (419 lbs.) of rhinoceros horns, at least ten metric tons of elephant ivory valued at more than \$7 million, and 10 kilograms (22 lbs.) of heroin.

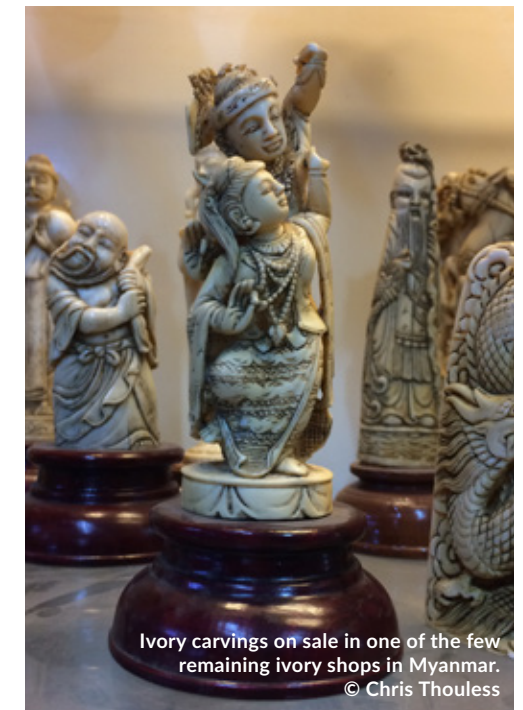
Achieving arrests and convictions of high-level traffickers, who many never actually handle ivory, is a big challenge for law enforcement agencies because of courtroom corruption and evidence tampering. These arrests, however, send a clear message to high-level traffickers who think they are untouchable that **wildlife trafficking is no longer an easy or safe form of crime**. This case also exposes the deep transnational criminal links between East and West Africa and the convergence between criminals engaged in wildlife and drug crimes. The arrests are the results of an impressive level of collaboration between the US government and law enforcement authorities and NGO partners in Africa.

The first half of 2019 has also been notable for the **large number of seizures of illegal ivory shipments**, in many cases combined with pangolin scales. Often law enforcement authorities have not followed up on the cases, content just to seize the contraband and sometimes to arrest the most immediate suspects, without going further. However, in Uganda, after a seizure of 3.3 metric tons of ivory and 400 kilograms (882 lbs.) of

pangolin scales, a deeper investigation led to the arrest of four Vietnamese nationals. This investigation was conducted with the support of ECF-grantee Natural Resource Conservation Network.

With the closure of legal markets in China, **much of the focus of the illegal ivory trade has switched to Southeast Asia**, particularly Vietnam and Laos, although it seems that the main end destination is still China. Last year the ECF provided grants to a number of partners working on anti-trafficking in these areas. A visit to Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand by an ECF team in early 2019 provided evidence of challenges in these countries, but also of a striking improvement in government action against the ivory trade. In most of the places we visited, including the notorious Kings Romans Casino in Laos, ivory was no longer publicly on sale. There were posters saying that sales of wildlife products were illegal, and a number of raids had taken place. Now that the ivory trade has been driven

underground it will be harder to police, but this is an inevitable waypoint on the journey towards a future with no trade.



Ivory carvings on sale in one of the few remaining ivory shops in Myanmar. © Chris Thouless

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

There has been much discussion around the possibility of ‘following the money’ in order to apprehend criminals active in the illegal wildlife trade. This would entail using financial investigations and anti-money laundering legislation to tackle high-level criminals who cannot be caught on wildlife ‘possession’ charges because they do not themselves handle the ivory.

However, turning theory into practice is not easy. Banks are constrained by privacy laws as to with whom they can share the relevant information. Furthermore, national organizations responsible for investigating financial crimes generally have little interest in or understanding of wildlife crime and wildlife authorities usually lack the skills or mandate to investigate financial crimes.

The Financial Taskforce of United for Wildlife (part of the Royal Foundation) was set up last year to bring together banks and wildlife crime experts to address these issues. The ECF has provided financial and technical support to the Taskforce.

We have also commissioned a study to find out how traffickers are using informal unrecorded banking arrangements, such as the Hawala system in the Middle East. If they are operating outside formal banking systems then new approaches need to be developed.



2.1 metric tons of ivory (more than 1,000 tusks) and eight metric tons of pangolin scales seized by customs officers in Hong Kong in January, found hidden in a container from Nigeria. © Alex Hofford

Demand Reduction Update

A remarkable change that has taken place over the last year is the **commitment by the Chinese authorities** to counter the illegal wildlife trade and to collaborate with NGOs. Another shift has been the willingness of Chinese embassies to accept the outcome when Chinese nationals are convicted of trafficking offenses, rather than objecting, as has happened in the past. This was shown when the 'Ivory Queen', Yang Feng Glan, was convicted in Tanzania and sentenced to 15 years in prison for smuggling nearly two metric tons of ivory; the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed China's support of the Tanzanian authorities in conducting a just investigation and trial.

In 2017 the Environmental Investigation Agency, with ECF support, published a report on a network of ivory criminals based in Shuidong, southern China. Chinese law enforcement agencies responded in 2018, arresting two of the key members of the gang

and sentencing them to 15- and six-years imprisonment. Finally the China Customs Anti-Smuggling Bureau announced on January 5, 2019 that it had **apprehended and repatriated the last of the three main culprits** from Nigeria to China.

Kenya has had a mixed record with regard to dealing with ivory traffickers. WildlifeDirect has been supporting the judicial process and report that, while treatment of low-level wildlife crimes has generally improved, there is still a **major problem with cases involving high-level traffickers**. After the successful appeal by Feisal Ali Mohammed against his sentence for ivory dealing last year, another suspect has been released, and not one of the cases related to the large number of major ivory confiscations in Mombasa has resulted in a lasting conviction. This is attributed to corruption and poor collection of evidence, leading to weak prosecution cases.

Now that there are no longer legal ivory sales in China, the approach to demand reduction has to change. Potential buyers are not only influenced by how they feel about ivory, but also the illegality of its purchase. For this reason, buyers are likely to be more 'hardened' and the messaging for demand reduction may have to focus more on its illegality and the consequences of being caught smuggling ivory. Since Chinese tourists, particularly those traveling to Southeast Asia, appear to be buying more ivory our support is focusing on ensuring there is clear messaging at border crossings through a variety of media, including posters and flyers. This has the advantage of not only targeting potential buyers, but also reminding customs officers to look out for smuggled ivory.



Chinese tourists in Laos wearing ivory pendants.
© Dudu Douglas-Hamilton

There are still some unresolved issues around the Chinese ban on ivory sales which took effect at the end of 2017. These primarily relate to how existing stockpiles of ivory will be managed and what exceptions may be available for **the sale of cultural relics** (antiques). The Natural Resources Defense Council has been assisting the Chinese government on these issues. Some local and city governments, including Beijing, have independently decided to end sales of ivory cultural relics. China is planning to release finalized regulations for ivory cultural relics in early 2020.



Yang Feng Glan on her way to court in Tanzania.
© Tanzania National Task Force Anti-Poaching



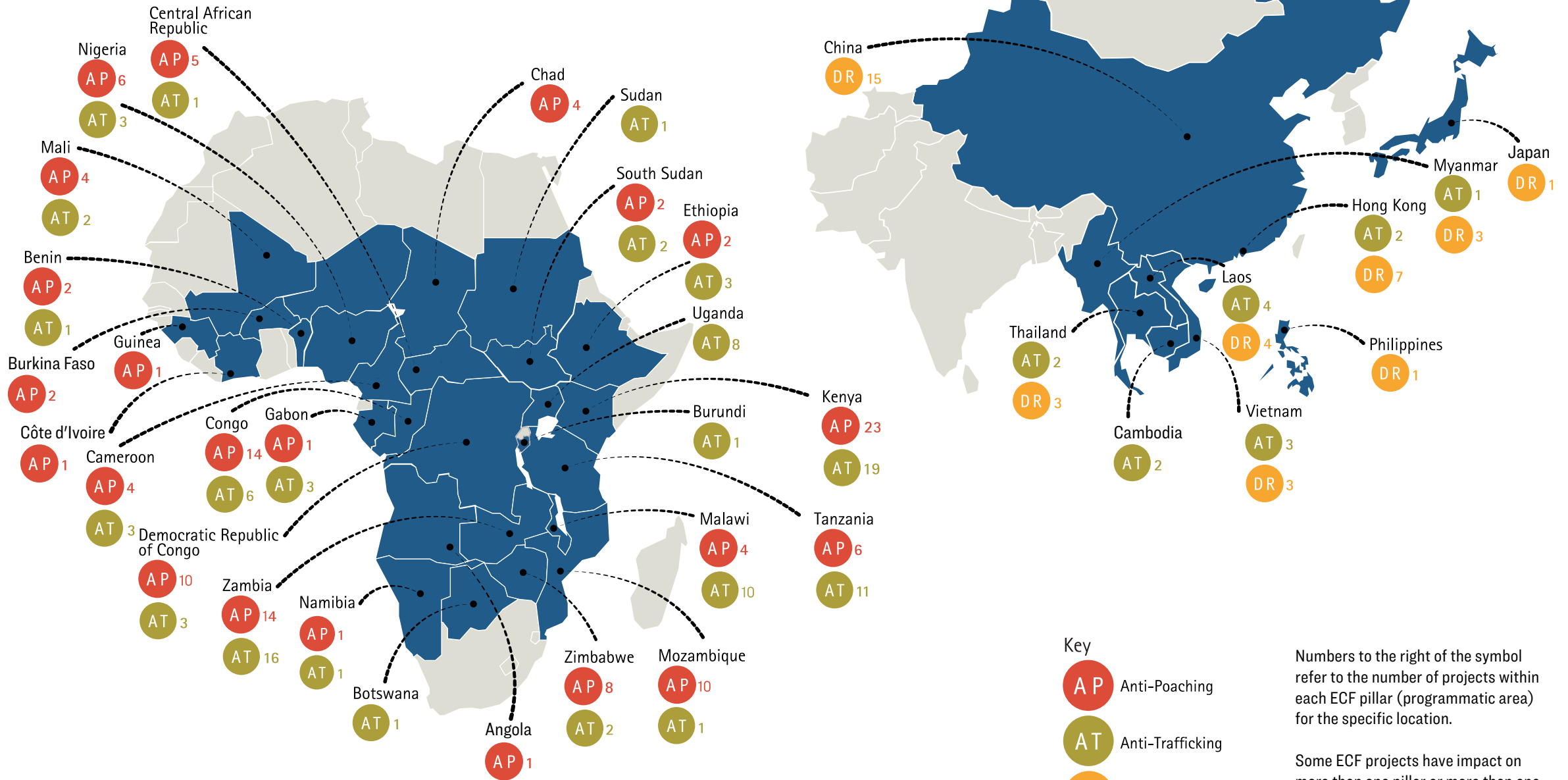
Part of a large ivory shipment viewed during investigations by the Environmental Investigation Agency in Shuidong, China.
© Environmental Investigation Agency



A poster designed by ECF partner WildAid for placement at Vietnam/China border crossings, warning of the consequences of trading in elephant ivory.
© WildAid

GLOBAL INVESTMENTS TO END THE IVORY CRISIS

ECF PROJECTS BY COUNTRY AND TYPE OF PROJECTS



* The ECF has also funded four anti-trafficking projects that span East Africa and twelve that impact multiple regions in Africa. In addition, the ECF has funded one anti-trafficking project and three demand reduction projects in the USA.

Key

- AP Anti-Poaching
- AT Anti-Trafficking
- DR Demand Reduction

Numbers to the right of the symbol refer to the number of projects within each ECF pillar (programmatic area) for the specific location.

Some ECF projects have impact on more than one pillar or more than one country and are therefore repeated.

This map includes all projects funded since the launch of the ECF in 2013.

Looking Ahead

Plans for the second half of 2019

- Continue support for law enforcement to protect forest elephants in Central Africa, especially in Gabon and Congo.
- Continue support for anti-poaching operations wherever there is a significant current or emerging threat to elephants.
- Provide support to small elephant populations under pressure from poaching, habitat loss, and human elephant conflict, including the desert elephants in Namibia.
- Pursue ivory trafficking investigations from Africa to Asia.
- Continue ivory market monitoring in Asia to guide demand reduction campaigns and law enforcement action. New approaches will be adopted, because of the closure of most overt markets.
- Gain further understanding of the ways that ivory is moving from Vietnam and Laos into China and use this to encourage relevant law enforcement action.
- Continue and extend the use of financial investigations to address wildlife crime.

Our Partners

We are privileged to have supported the following outstanding organizations' crucial work to end the ivory crisis. Whether partners with whom we have worked for years, or newcomers to the Elephant Crisis Fund, all represent the most critical, innovative, and impactful projects that are safeguarding the future of wild elephants.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ADM Capital Foundation | Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation |
| African Parks | Maisha Consulting |
| Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, Gabon | Mara Elephant Project |
| Basel Institute on Governance | Mareja Community Conservation Project |
| Big Life Foundation | Natural Resource Conservation Network |
| Biocarbon Partners | Natural Resources Defense Council |
| Born Free Foundation | Northern Rangelands Trust |
| Centre on Illicit Networks and Transnational Organised Crime | PAMS Foundation |
| Chengeta Wildlife | Save The Elephants |
| Conservation Justice | Southern Tanzania Elephant Project |
| Conservation Lake Tanganyika | Space for Giants |
| Conservation Lower Zambezi | Stichting Wings for Conservation |
| Conservation South Luangwa | Stop Ivory |
| East African Wildlife Society | Tashinga Initiative Trust |
| Elephants Alive | The WILD Foundation |
| Elephant Family | The Zambezi Society |
| Elephant Voices | Tikki Hywood Foundation |
| Environmental Investigation Agency | TRAFFIC |
| Fauna and Flora International | Tsavo Trust |
| Focus Africa | Uganda Conservation Foundation |
| Focused Conservation Solutions | University of Utah IsoForensics |
| Forgotten Parks Foundation | University of Washington |
| Frankfurt Zoological Society | Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust |
| Freeland | WildAid |
| Game Rangers International | WildlifeDirect |
| Global Wildlife Conservation | Wildlife Action Group Malawi |
| Gorongosa Restoration Project | Wildlife Conservation Global |
| Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| Basel Institute on Governance | Wildlife Crime Prevention |
| International Fund for Animal Welfare | Wildlife Justice Commission |
| Kissama Foundation | Wildlife Traxx Consultancy |
| Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia | Wildlife Works |
| Liberty Shared | Working Dogs for Conservation |
| Lilongwe Wildlife Trust | World Wildlife Fund |
| | Zoological Society of London |



Thank you

We couldn't do this without you.

As the reach of the ECF evolves and expands, we are constantly aware that without your support none of this would be possible. Your commitment to the vision of the Elephant Crisis Fund and to the activities of our on-the-ground partners, and your drive to ensure that we have the funds to continue this essential work, is humbling. On behalf of Save the Elephants, the Wildlife Conservation Network, our courageous partners in the field, and the elephants whose safety you ensure, we thank you.

We are extremely grateful to the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation for their partnership, to our many generous, private contributors, and to the collaborative and dynamic backing from our major institutional supporters, #knotonmyplanet and Tiffany & Co.



Wildlife Conservation Network

elephantcrisisfund.org