

## CEPF Final Project Completion Report

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| <b>Organization Legal Name</b> | Wildlife Conservation Society   |
| <b>Project Title</b>           | Breaking the Chain: Building a Civil Society-Government Transnational Partnership to Combat Major Wildlife Trade Networks in Lao PDR, Vietnam and China |
| <b>CEPF GEM No.</b>            | 64091   |
| <b>Date of Report</b>          | 30 November 2016  |

**CEPF Hotspot:** Indo-Burma

**Strategic Direction:** 2. Demonstrate innovative responses to illegal trafficking and consumption of wildlife

**Grant Amount:** US\$324,550

**Project Dates:** 1 October 2014 – 30 September 2016

### 1. Implementation Partners for this Project

The Viet Nam CITES Management Authority (MA) of the Viet Nam Forest Administration, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was our main implementing partner for this project in Vietnam. CITES MA Viet Nam is the focal point for wildlife trade management and the guarantor for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CITES MA China on trans-border wildlife trade control. Furthermore, chairing the Viet Nam Wildlife Enforcement Network (Viet Nam WEN), CITES MA Viet Nam plays a key role in triggering and coordinating the action of other government agencies to counter illegal wildlife trafficking. The Viet Nam CITES MA worked closely with WCS in implementing project activities, serving as the official government co-host, issuing introduction/invitation letters and providing data for the intelligence analyses.

The Department of Forest Inspection (DoFI), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR was our main implementation partner for this project in Lao PDR with additional participation in events from Lao PDR CITES Management Authority, Customs, Border Army, Interpol, Environmental Police and the Provincial Office of Natural resource and Environment. The Department of Forest Inspection is the prime agency responsible for investigation and enforcement activities under the Forestry Law 2007 No06/NA, and the Wildlife and Aquatic Law 2007 No07/NA, of the Government of Lao PDR, and is the lead agent for the Lao Wildlife Enforcement network (Lao WEN.) CITES MA Lao PDR is the focal point for wildlife trade management and the guarantor for the MoU with CITES MA China on trans-border wildlife trade control. DoFI were the official government co-host of the project and responsible to oversee all activities implementation, issuing introduction/invitation letters and monitoring outcomes.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA) was the lead implementing partner for the Chinese government providing logistic support and government outreach.

This project was implemented under the WCS-State Forestry Administration Memorandum of Understanding who assigned the China CITES Management Authority to facilitate coordination among law enforcement agencies. The China CITES MA actively participated in the trade chain mission, in the high level three country meeting, and in the elaboration of the situation analysis. WCS also closely collaborated with the China Customs and Forestry Police both at the central level and specifically their Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan local branches; including the

Customs Enforcement Division and the Forestry Criminal Investigation Division who attended the final high level meeting. Additional partners included Nanjing Forestry Police College, Guangdong Coastal and Anti-Smuggling Office, Guangxi Anti-Smuggling Office, Guangxi Border Army, Customs General Guangdong Sub Bureau, Guangdong Border Army, Guangdong Coast Guard, Tencent Holdings Limited and SF Express have presented their work in the Guangzhou Meeting and joined the discussion. Nanning Customs, Guangxi Border Army, Guangxi Forestry Police, Dongxing Anti-Smuggling Office, Dongxing Forestry Police, Dongxing Customs Anti-Smuggling Bureau, Dongxing Border Army have presented their work in Guangxi and engaged the trilateral conversation.

## **2 Conservation Impact**

### **2.1 Describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF investment strategy set out in the ecosystem profile**

The project relates to Strategic Direction 2. “Demonstrate innovative responses to illegal trafficking and consumption of wildlife”. Specifically, it addressed the following investment priorities in Viet Nam, China and Lao PDR: 2.1 “Unravel high-level wildlife trade networks through investigations, informants and support to enforcement agencies”; and 2.2 “Pilot initiatives to reduce cross-border trafficking of wildlife, in collaboration with border authorities and nontraditional actors”.

With CEPF funds, WCS has generated a series of actionable intelligence products including dossiers on major wildlife trafficking networks, criminal network link-analyses and geographic intelligence products. We have worked with our Government stakeholders to introduce frontline officers to international best practice in intelligence gathering and analysis through the deployment of the i2-powered WCS wildlife trafficking database.

The project supported innovative means of enabling greater cooperation and coordination between government agencies at the domestic level, including those not traditionally involved in countering wildlife trafficking such as prosecutors, border army; and at the international level where we facilitated information exchange between Viet Nam, China and Lao PDR at the field level and also at a central level. Our efforts have resulted in new levels of enforcement cooperation between the three countries manifest in new legislation under development and arrests catalyzed through international information-sharing.

### **2.2 Summarize the overall results/impact of your project**

The project has generated a reliable understanding of major wildlife trafficking networks operating in Lao, Vietnam and China highlighting 40 priority locations, and 32 individuals and companies and the connections between them. The project has catalyzed cooperation between the countries at a central level resulting in new and renewed MoUs on wildlife trafficking, enforcement action. The project assisted to formulate plans to mainstream wildlife into existing enforcement cooperation mechanisms used for narcotics and human trafficking and has clearly communicated the comparative legal and institutional structure and counterpart agencies and focal points to all countries. We have created momentum for international cooperation in key agencies demonstrated by the increase in requests for support and assistance from WCS to trans-boundary cooperative activities.

### **2.3 Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)**

1. Reduced threat to CEPF priority species by dismantling the wildlife trade chain extending from the major trade hub of Bolikhamxay province (Lao PDR) through Viet Nam and into the region's largest demand market in Guangdong province (China)
2. Strengthened collaboration on wildlife crime law enforcement at central levels between Lao PDR, Viet Nam and China and at local levels at key border crossings

#### **2.3.1 Actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion**

1. It is premature to say that any criminal networks have been disrupted by the enforcement actions catalyzed by this project. WCS continues to work with our enforcement partners in all countries to catalyze further enforcement actions on the individuals identified by our analyses. For example, in Lao PDR we worked with DoFI and DoNRE to build commitment to announce the closure of tiger farms operated by Vannaseng and Vinnasakhone and are continuing to leverage further funds to ensure those commitments are followed through.

2. The project has strengthened collaboration at central and local levels between the three countries. This is illustrated by the signing of MoUs on cooperation to combat wildlife trafficking between Vietnam and China and between Lao PDR and China; the establishment of an emergency contact mechanism for frontline officers that work on illegal wildlife trade; and the first major seizure of wildlife on the Vietnam-China border that came about through information-sharing from China to Vietnam, via WCS.

### **2.4 Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)**

1. Increased effectiveness of the law enforcement response in Lao PDR, Viet Nam and China to prevent (policies, legislation and programs), detect (arrest and seizures) and suppress (prosecutions and convictions) organized wildlife crime operating along a major trans-national trade network.
2. All high-level cross-border trafficking networks operating in these localities are identified and investigated through a new Government-Civil Society collaboration using professional analytical tools to manage, analyze, and communicate the intelligence to key stakeholders.
3. Strategic plans to disrupt and dismantle at least one criminal network are adopted in all three countries thanks to a stronger political commitment.

#### **2.4.1 Actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion**

1. The project contributed to enhancements made in the institutional framework to prevent and detect wildlife crimes. For example, following the recommendations made by officers joining the trade chain mission, the Guangdong Provincial law enforcement coordination network has been expanded to include Guangdong Forestry Police and CITES MA Guangzhou to incorporate IWT issues more effectively. Additionally, new and renewed Memorandum of Understandings have been signed between the three countries and further provincial level agreements are being drafted by our government counterparts, particularly the Guangxi Province Anti-Smuggling Office who now prioritise IWT issues far greater than before the project. The relationships built through this project and the increased opportunities for engagement on this issue resulted in the first major case of wildlife trafficking detected on the Vietnam-China border in many years. This case was the result of information shared between China and Vietnam, via WCS during a bi-lateral meeting being held under this project.

2. The project has generated a reliable understanding of major wildlife trafficking networks operating in Lao, Vietnam and China highlighting 40 priority locations, and 32 individuals and companies and the links between them. The information was generated through a close partnership between WCS and our government partners and analysed using i2-powered analytical software. The intelligence products (i.e. company/individual dossiers, link analyses and Geographic analyses) have been shared with key agencies along the trade network

3. The project has yet to have strategic plans adopted by agencies in all countries. Through implementing the project we understand that different strategies and different agencies at different levels (e.g. local to central) are required to lead enforcement efforts depending on the criminal group in question and the corrupt relationships they hold in government. WCS is in the process of developing specific strategies for each high-priority individual we have identified as a major wildlife trafficker.

### **3. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?**

Nothing to report.

### **4. Project Components and Products/Deliverables**

**Component 1: Accurate information and intelligence generated and disseminated on the criminal individuals, companies, species traded, and modus operandi along a major international trade route.**

Products / Deliverables 1.1. A situation analysis on the major Indo-Burma trade network (Bolikhamsay-Ha Tinh-Dong Dang/Mong Cai Dong Xing-Fangcheng-Nanning-Guangzhou) based upon intelligence-led investigations using professional techniques; government data collection; and an institutional and legal analysis.

With support from CEPF, WCS were able to gather information on individuals, companies, and groups involved in wildlife trade networks spanning among the three countries, sourcing such information from news media, government records and undercover surveys and investigations. In Viet Nam, WCS cooperated with the CITES MA to identify Vietnamese companies and individuals and their connection to the major wildlife trading companies in Lao PDR and China (based upon CITES permits for import, export and re-export) during the 2013-2015 period. Additional verification was performed through undercover investigations to check the links between these companies/individuals and other suspects. Further information-gathering was carried out in Mong Cai (Viet Nam) bordering with Dongxing (China) and Cau Treo (Viet Nam) sharing the border with Bolikhamsay (Laos), as well as and other relevant locations such as Nghe An province of Viet Nam. Twenty-nine suspects identified as kingpins, middlemen, and transporters were identified along trade route between Viet Nam, Laos and China. In Lao PDR, WCS continued to collect information on the three large organisations trafficking illegal wildlife along the trade chain through government document review and informants. Vinnasakhone and Vannaseng were discovered to be farming and exporting large amounts of tiger products to Viet Nam and providing Lao PDR-based Chinese companies the raw materials for the production of tiger bone wine for the Chinese market. In China, WCS carried out open-source intell-gathering on any Chinese companies and individuals implicated in wildlife trafficking from the surveys in Lao and Vietnam and we also carried out social-media based surveys to identify additional traders with links to Vietnam and Lao.

WCS carried out research on the respective institutional frameworks for wildlife management and conservation, comparing the structures for law enforcement in the three countries. WCS produced a diagram for each country, as well as a comparative table, which highlights the functions of different agencies and shows which ones are relevant counterparts. WCS also compiled information on the legal framework to combat wildlife trafficking in the three countries, comparing administrative fines and criminal penalties, first for wildlife crimes and second for ancillary crimes (smuggling of goods, corruption, advertising banned goods etc.). The research highlights that there is a need for harmonization of the legal framework in order to ensure that criminals face strong penalties if they get arrested at any point along the trafficking route, from Laos, through Viet Nam, to China. In order to analyze existing international cooperation mechanisms between the three countries, WCS developed a questionnaire and sent it out to our government partners. This was followed by interviews. The aim was to find out how the agencies of three countries cooperate, which mechanisms are used, and what avenues exist to strengthen efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. The analysis is included as an annex to this report.

Products / Deliverables 1.2. Intelligence briefs and enforcement impacts on criminal networks generated by professional analytical software (capable of unifying intelligence, by linking individuals, criminal activities and networks)

With support from CEPF, in August 2015, the professional analytical software (i2) was successfully deployed for WCS. The software is accessible in Lao PDR, China and Indonesia to build an international shared database of detailed intelligence on wildlife trafficking.

Training and advanced training courses in analysis were delivered by Tim Wittig (Senior Wildlife Trafficking Analyst - WCS) and Ash Leber (Visual Analysis) in March and August 2015 for WCS staff members from China, Laos and Viet Nam who are working with the i2 software.

All materials related to wildlife trafficking collected in Viet Nam, Laos and China, including field survey results, government records and public reports as mention in the “*Products/Deliverables 1.1*” were uploaded into the i2 database. Using this tool, WCS was able to draw a comprehensive picture of the trade routes among the three countries, as well as deliver products including: 52 Dossiers on companies and actors involved in the illegal trade, a list of enforcement entry-points/trafficking hotspots, and six geo-intelligence maps on trafficking routes and link analyses.

Products / Deliverables 1.3. Government-led investigations, based on project generated intelligence, executed on prioritised targets and wildlife criminals arrested.

In Vietnam, the dossiers created under this project were shared with trusted law enforcement partners including both national and local level Customs, Environmental Police of Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh, and key border provinces including Quang Ninh in northern Viet Nam and Ha Tinh in Central Viet Nam.

During the project period, intelligence information related to an online trader and a smuggling case in Quang Ninh province (Viet Nam) along the border with Guangxi province (China) was reported to the provincial Department of Environment Police and the Department of Customs. This information resulted in one successful seizure in November 2015, and an ongoing investigation. The seizure case was a successful joint action against ivory and pangolin smugglers along the Viet Nam-China border. At a meeting organized by WCS China, the China Customs shared detailed information regarding an illegal shipment entering from Viet Nam. WCS China passed this information to WCS Viet Nam who shared it with the Customs Department of Quang

Ninh province, Viet Nam. As a result, two shipments of pangolin scales and ivory were seized (over 1200kg of ivory and 3000kg pangolin scales). This case is currently under further investigation by law enforcement agencies of both countries.

Intelligence information about an online (Facebook) trader of tigers in Ha Tinh province based in Lao PDR was collected and shared with Ha Tinh Department of Environmental Police in 2016. The law enforcement agency undertook investigation to verify the information, however by that time the suspect closed his Facebook account, so the case is still under investigation.

WCS investigations gathered intelligence on illegal trade of ivory and rhino horn trading activities taking place in a village in the outskirts of Ha Noi. Our analyses showed that some village inhabitants were engaged in processing the wildlife products and providing them to Chinese traders. Illegal goods were transported mainly through routes from Mong Cai (Quang Ninh province, Viet Nam) to Dongxing (Guangxi province, China), and from Huu Nghi (Lang Son province, Viet Nam) to Pingxiang (Guangxi province, China). Profiles of the village and relevant suspects were developed and shared to Department of Environmental Police at both central and local levels in 2014. In July 2016, this intelligence lead to a series of successful law enforcement actions on the illegal trade of ivory were undertaken by the Environmental Police Department and the Anti-smuggling Police, from the Ministry of Public Security of Viet Nam. The actions led to 4 seizure cases with 7 suspects, and 252.36kg of ivory products. One of these subjects was caught red-handed when he was transporting ivory product to a bus station in Ha Noi for delivery to Mong Cai city of Quang Ninh province (border with Guangxi province – China). The other suspect was known as one of the biggest wholesalers in wildlife products such as pangolin, turtle, civet, etc. sourced mostly from Lao PDR and dealing with retailers in Ha Noi. Further investigation is undergoing.

Based upon the findings of our investigations, WCS was able to brief the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment about the illegal farming and trade in tigers, and to provide recommendations for the closure of the tiger farms in Lao PDR. The Minister of Natural Resource and Environment delivered an intervention at the CITES Standing Committee in September 2016 pledging to close the tiger farms, and called upon neighboring countries to follow their lead. It is expected that this action will have a strong impact on the companies involved, expose some of their other activities involving illegal wildlife trade and increase pressure on China and Viet Nam to close their tiger farms as well.

### **Component 2: Increased political support towards effective enforcement on wildlife criminals within the three countries at national, provincial and local levels**

By support of this grant, government agencies at national, provincial and local levels in all three project countries have had chance to communicate through the participation in the joint-field missions in March 2016, and in the tri-lateral meeting in August 2016. In addition, with support from other WCS private donors in cooperation with CITES MA Viet Nam, CITES MA China and the Department of Forest Inspection of Lao PDR, three bi-lateral meetings for CITES MA and law enforcement agencies of bordering provinces of three countries were facilitated in November 2015, July 2016 and October 2016. In these occasions, government representatives of the three countries have developed a mutual understanding on their mandate, challenges and efforts against illegal wildlife crime. They also identified their overseas counterparts and discussed on solutions and recommendations to promote an effective cooperation in combating transnational smuggling, including wildlife. Reports of the field trip and the meetings with clear recommendations were shared to all participating agencies, as well as other relevant ones to make them aware about these issues and enhance their support.

Products / Deliverables 2.1: Workshop for Central government representatives (Lao PDR, Vietnam, China) to reach consensus on priority actions and responses to wildlife trafficking between the three countries resulting in a joint communiqué and the development of joint-plans and cooperative agreements towards tackling transnational wildlife crime between the three countries

On 24<sup>th</sup> Aug 2016, 31 government representatives from China, Viet Nam and Lao PDR gathered for a tri-lateral meeting in Guangzhou city of China. The meeting was co-hosted by WCS and the China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA). The participants presented for relevant agencies of three countries at both central and provincial level such as CITES Management Authority, Customs, Border Army, Forest Police, Environment Police, Interpol, Anti-smuggling Office.

This meeting secured high-level political support for joint efforts to tackle wildlife trafficking in Lao PDR, China and Vietnam; and joint statement enlisted a set of recommendations and next steps agreed during the three-country trade chain mission in March 2016, and identified opportunities for joint actions between different agencies and country partners.

In this occasion, representatives of provincial law enforcement agencies whose staff joined the trade chain mission shared their observation and recommendations from the trip with their colleagues higher in rank. The meeting also provided an opportunity for WCS to present key findings on the illegal supply chain among the three countries and other activities implemented with support from CEPF.

The representative from CITES Management Authority of China agreed that “illegal transnational trade of wildlife is issue in all countries. Therefore, there is a need for international cooperation in order to combating this crime [more effectively]”. The representative of Viet Nam delegation stated that “illegal wildlife trade is well organized and increasing both in quantity and weight, therefore law enforcement agencies of Viet Nam need to cooperate with our counterparts of Lao PDR and China on sharing intelligence information, and take specific actions to break illegal transnational networks and supply chains of endangered wildlife”.

Through sections of sharing law enforcement structure and group discussion on existing international cooperation mechanism between three countries, agencies such as CITES Management Authority, Customs, Border Army, Interpol, Environmental Police, Forest Police, and Anti-smuggling Office, all identified their oversea counterparts and communication channels for cooperating in cases of transnational wildlife trafficking. It appeared that there are several opportunities for cooperation among agencies of three countries at both central and provincial on the prevention and suppression of transnational crime, including wildlife trafficking. However, such cooperation agreement are still to lead to a successful cooperation case related to wildlife trafficking.

The joint statement of the meeting was consulted and agreed in advance by joined agencies. It prioritized following main points:

- a) Ensure a policy and legal framework that supports cooperative law enforcement activities at national and provincial levels between the three countries by:
  - Applying existing bilateral and regional Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) to wildlife trafficking cases, or amend them as required to ensure they can be applied to wildlife trafficking cases;

- Promoting action under existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the three countries at both central and provincial levels;
  - Integrating transnational wildlife trafficking enforcement cooperation into the agendas of joint government meetings to build wider understanding of the problems raised by illegal trafficking and the actions that are needed to address it.
- b) Strengthen capacity for cooperative actions by:
- Identifying opportunities for more joint inter-agency and cross-border training programs, bringing partner law enforcement agencies together to build greater inter-agency connections between frontline officers, trust between countries and support a common understanding of issues and approaches to tackling wildlife crimes.
- c) Establish mechanisms for cooperative law enforcement actions by:
- Developing a plan to establish a multi-agency international task force on wildlife trafficking that would lead the planning and implementation of law enforcement strategies between the three countries (e.g. coordination on patrols and crackdowns, joint-investigations, real-time intelligence-sharing, controlled deliveries, etc.).
- d) Promote more practical and effective communication mechanisms to support the implementation of these agreed actions by:
- Identifying focal points in all relevant line agencies at provincial and/or central levels to facilitate cross-border communication and act as primary liaison for international cooperation;
  - Enhancing existing mechanisms that allow the real-time sharing of relevant CITES and customs documentation between law enforcement agencies of export and import countries to support greater coordination.
- e) Perform a periodic review of this cooperation mechanism by:
- Undertaking annual reviews of the progress toward implementing these actions by the central-level focal points in each country, and facilitating an annual meeting to discuss achievements and next steps.
- f) Other areas of potential collaboration:
- Combating wildlife crime is an activity that requires international collaboration and efforts, additional support from other international, civil organizations, and concerned individuals. All these are highly valued as long as they are in line with country-specific legislation in China, Laos and Viet Nam.

Products / Deliverables 2.2: International and inter-agency communication mechanisms and cooperation strengthened between frontline officers in the three countries through participation in joint-field missions and co-authoring of joint-briefing reports that will be submitted to their national governments and presented at a trilateral meeting for the provinces.

In March 2016, a trade chain mission took place along wildlife trade routes across the three countries: Guangzhou (China) – Guangxi (China) – Quang Ninh (Vietnam) – Ha Tinh (Vietnam) –



Bolikhamxay (Lao PDR) – Vientiane (Lao PDR). This mission saw the participation of 14 law enforcement officers from each country for a 10 day field mission.

Chinese participants were from CITES MA China – Guangzhou Office, Guangxi Anti-Smuggling Office, Guangdong Coastal and Anti-Smuggling Office. Vietnamese participants were from CITES MA Viet Nam, Department of Ha Tinh Environment Police, Department of Ha Tinh Border Army, Department of Ha Tinh Customs, Department of Quang Ninh Environment Police, Department of Quang Ninh Customs. Laos PDR participants were from CITES MA Lao PDR, Department of Forest Inspection (DOFI), Bolikhamxay Provincial Officer of Forest Inspection, Bolikhamxay Provincial Customs Anti-Smuggling Unit, Bolikhamxay Environmental Police, Bolikhamxay Provincial Border Army.

This three-country trade chain mission was the first of its kind to bring together law enforcement officers from China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam to travel together along a suspected illegal wildlife supply chain. One of the main goals of the activity was to secure common agreement on the factors currently preventing deeper cooperation and the steps that could be taken by each agency and country to counter these factors. A number of workshops and meetings were held during the ten day mission to provide structured opportunities for discussion of wildlife trafficking, the jurisdiction of the agencies involved and the main challenges faced by each country.

WCS also facilitated additional less structured field trips to the main wildlife markets in China, border crossings and checkpoints that could offer effective opportunities for joint action.

WCS also organized a provincial level government meeting at the end of the mission in Vientiane, Lao PDR, which sought to agree and codify the lessons learned, factors inhibiting greater cross-border cooperation, recommendations and next steps for each country office. In particular, the meeting achieved the following:

- a) Participants identified and shared the lessons they had learned in their work fighting wildlife trafficking. They shared their understanding of the policies and approaches of each country in tackling wildlife trafficking, and learned about the added value of collaborating with WCS international network in the region, as well as the opportunities offered by joint enforcement actions.
- b) Participants shared their challenges and difficulties, identifying as primary issues preventing a greater international and inter-agency cooperation the differences between legal institutions and operating procedures in each country, which lead to a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of different agencies. The lack of or inefficient cross border communication mechanisms between agencies prevent timely and effective information sharing as well as opportunities for on the ground collaboration. These factors are compounded by the lack of a common language facilitating informal cooperation and limiting agencies to high level institutional communication.
- c) Participants outlined a number of recommendations to guide the next steps:
  - Increase joint cross border training workshops, bringing partner agencies (such as the border guard or customs) together in a relatively informal setting such as workshops offers an opportunity for building interpersonal connections between frontline officers, thus building trust between countries and supporting a common understanding of issues and approaches to tackling wildlife crimes.

- Encourage specific and actionable agreements to be developed and signed between border provinces in each country, these should provide sufficient background to build the capacity of officials in each country to understand the operating context for wildlife trafficking in partner countries.
- Establish, maintain and regularly make use of communication mechanisms between border provinces and agencies in each country. Several existing mechanisms are established but in part as a result of mistrust they are under-utilized.
- In the absence of actions 1-3 above, WCS should further develop its coordination role between the three countries, sharing information and bringing agencies together regularly for cross-border meetings and workshops.

This mission enabled the establishment of personal and direct links between participants from each country and agency encouraging formal and informal communication and providing the basis for a stronger cooperation. It also helped building a shared understanding of wildlife trade issues and enforcement response procedures to an unprecedented level.

The mission report was drafted and finalized by WCS with comments from all participants. It was translated into all three local languages and submitted to the national government level of the participated agencies, including: the Vietnam Administration of Forestry, General Department of Viet Nam Customs, National Department of Environment Police, National Department of Border Army, CITES MA China Guangzhou Office, Guangdong Coastal and Anti-Smuggling Office, Guangxi Anti-Smuggling Office. The report was also presented in the tri-lateral meeting among higher level of government agencies in August 2016.

Products / Deliverables 2.3. Agreement upon priority joint-responses between the key provincial governments along the trade chain manifested in a joint-communiqué, internal government reports and directives following the tri-lateral meeting for the provinces.

With CEPF support, in August 2016 a tri-lateral meeting between China, Viet Nam and Lao PDR was held in Guangzhou, addressing the strengthening of cross-border cooperation on transnational wildlife smuggling among provincial government agencies. As result, two priority joint-responses from Guangxi province (China) and border provinces of Viet Nam (Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Cao Bang) were agreed as:

- i) Organize a joint training for front line officers of border provinces of China (Guangxi) and Viet Nam (Quang Ninh, Lang Son).
- ii) Organize the bi-lateral meeting between Anti-smuggling committee of Guangxi province, China and four border provinces of Viet Nam (Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Cao Bang) in late 2016 or early 2017. This meeting would take place either by:
  - Anti-smuggling committee of Guangxi province – China propose the idea to the National Anti-smuggling committee of China. Then the National committee of China will approach Committee on Combating Smuggling, Commercial Frauds and Counterfeit Goods of Viet Nam to coordinate the meeting.
  - Anti-smuggling committee of Guangxi province – China invite Committee on Combating Smuggling, Commercial Frauds and Counterfeit Goods of Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Cao Bang province – Viet Nam and copy to the committee at central level of Viet Nam to the bi-lateral meeting.

After the meeting, representatives from the Committee on Combating Smuggling, Commercial Frauds and Counterfeit Goods of Viet Nam and the committee of Quang Ninh province who attended the meeting would submit an internal report of the meeting with the suggested joint activities to their managers for consideration. From the China side, the Anti-smuggling committee of Guangxi province has consulted with their managing department to find out the best way to approach the Vietnamese counterparts.

With support from leveraged funds, from 20 to 23 November 2016 WCS facilitated the first bi-lateral meeting for law enforcement agencies of Guangxi province (China) and Quang Ninh province (Viet Nam). 19 government officers from CITES MA, Customs, Environmental Police, Forest Police, Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Department, Border Guard, and Forest Protection Department of both sides attended the meeting in Nanning city, China.

The meeting was aimed at fostering a better mutual understanding of the situation of frontline law enforcement agencies on the two sides of Sino-Vietnam border and to create a cooperation mechanism to tackle illegal wildlife trade. As result, the following points were agreed:

- i) Both sides agreed on establishing an emergency contact mechanism to increase law enforcement efficiency. Both CITES MA China and Viet Nam will start the administrative process of building this relationship after the meeting.
- ii) Both sides are strongly urging for a joint training with frontline officers of Quang Ninh and Guangxi province to enhance the knowledge on wildlife crime and standardize the understanding of regulations.

With support from leveraged funds, from 11 to 15 July 2016 WCS was able to support a workshop for CITES MA, enforcement agencies at national and provincial levels of China and Lao PDR who had participated in the China-Laos CITES Law Enforcement Exchange Seminar organized by CITES MA of China in Yunnan Province, China. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- i) Report on the result of the activities implementation regarding the MoU between CITES Lao PDR and CITES China;
- ii) Discuss and share information on wildlife trafficking between both countries in order to upscale cooperation mechanisms.

The meeting was attended by 50 participants from both countries from CITES MA, Forestry Police, Customs, Border Inspection, and Forestry Department at national level and provincial level of Yunnan (China) and 5 provinces of northern Lao PDR (namely Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Phongsaly, Xayabuly, and Oudomxay), and several wildlife conservation NGOs. Effective outcomes have been achieved including a renewed determination to cooperate between China and Lao PDR sides, a better understanding of law enforcement agency counterparts to ensure the efficiency of cooperation, and the commitment to include wildlife trade into the existing cooperation mechanisms. Three major conclusions were made in the workshop:

- i) to fulfill Sino-Lao CITES Implementation Cooperation MoU, joint trainings and other listed activities will be planned in the coming year;
- ii) to adapt existing bilateral communication mechanisms in provincial level enforcement agencies (e.g. Yunnan Customs and Customs of neighbored Lao provinces) with CITES enforcement;
- iii) to push the Yunnan Forestry Police with Divisions of Department of Forestry Inspection of northern Lao PDR provinces (Luangnamtha, Phongsaly, Bokeo and

Oudomxay) to establish a closer cooperation mechanism to combat wildlife trafficking along the borders of each province.

With support from other private donors, WCS facilitated a meeting between law enforcement agencies of Viet Nam and China border provinces during the CITES Law Enforcement Exchange Seminar between China and Viet Nam which was hosted by CITES MA China in Guilin city, China from 24 to 28 October 2016.

This meeting was attended by 50 participants of both countries from CITES MA, Forestry Police, Environmental Police, Customs, Border Army, Forest Protection Department, at national level and provincial level of Guangxi (China) and two border provinces of northern Viet Nam (Quang Ninh and Lang Son), and several wildlife conservation NGOs. On this occasion, issues related to strengthening cooperation between border provinces of Viet Nam and China were discussed.

The main activities agreed by the parties involved were:

- i) Building a cooperation mechanism (MoU or agreement) between Forest Police of China and Forest Protection Department of Viet Nam for border provinces;
- ii) Intergrade wildlife trafficking into existing regular meetings of border provinces of Viet Nam and China;
- iii) Organize joint trainings for law enforcement of Guangxi and border provinces of Viet Nam in 2017 (probably in Quang Ninh province of Viet Nam);
- iv) Cooperate between the Anti-Smuggling Office of Guangxi province and the Anti-Smuggling Committees of border provinces of Viet Nam (Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Cao Bang, Ha Giang).

Products / Deliverables 2.4. Development and implementation of three communication strategies to disseminate key information from the situation analysis to the three countries and external stakeholders (e.g. United States, European Union, CITES secretariat, ASEAN-WEN, UNODC, and Interpol ECP)

WCS developed a communication strategy tailored on the different partners and languages in three countries in order to disseminate key findings of the situation analysis and project outputs. This strategy focused on:

- a. Clarifying the audience for outputs produced during this project, including enforcement agencies at the frontline, provincial and national level, international agencies, NGOs, academics and the general public. In Viet Nam, a broad range of government agencies are the target audience for our project activities, including partners directly involved such as CITES Management Authority of Viet Nam, Standing Office of Steering Committee on Combating Smuggling, Commercial Frauds and Counterfeit Goods of Viet Nam, authorities of Quang Ninh, Ha Tinh province; and also Lang Son, Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Nghe An provinces which albeit not directly involved in the project activities are also targeted in order to encourage their involvement in the future.
- b. Identifying the target audience for each wildlife product nationally and internationally.
- c. Identifying channels of communication and influence with each audience, including localized briefing packs shared to participants of joint field mission, bi-lateral and tri-lateral meetings, presentations in WCS and government informal meetings, national and international meetings, etc.

WCS implemented a targeted dissemination of the findings from the situation analysis through national communication strategies focused on the needs and preferences of stakeholders in each country. These consisted in:

- a) National level dissemination: Two main channels for dissemination were used:
- i. A series of meetings and field trips were organized and implemented to share the key outputs of the situation analysis and the deliverables of the 1<sup>st</sup> joint counter wildlife trafficking cooperation project promoted by WCS among Viet Nam, Laos and China. This information was shared as handouts, intergraded into meeting/mission reports, and submitted to the government agency managers after that.
    - November 2015: WCS Viet Nam and WCS China supported a bilateral meeting between law enforcement agencies from each country and promote the discussion of the lessons learned from the ongoing situation analysis with participants.
    - March 2016: The main findings from the situation analysis were included in the pre-mission briefing pack ahead of the trade chain mission. Situation analysis findings and lessons learned also provided the basis for discussions and were included in meeting agendas throughout the mission. Topic discussed included the challenges and issues facing law enforcement efforts in each country and how to maximize their impact.
    - June 2016: The combined report and recommendations of the situation analysis and three-country trade chain mission trip were translated into Chinese, Lao and Vietnamese and shared directly with each relevant government agency.
    - July 2016: WCS China and WCS Lao PDR supported a 5 day bilateral meeting between enforcement agencies in the bordering provinces, which included discussions of how to operationalize the overall situation analysis findings and recommendations at provincial level.
    - August 2016: A situation analysis was presented at the tri-lateral meeting, describing the status of wildlife trade between Lao PDR, Viet Nam and China, highlighting the trade routes, the modus operandi, analyzing the international cooperative mechanisms between the three countries, and expressing a number of recommendations for overcoming its shortcomings. Participating countries engaged in discussions around the contents of this presentation, which were reflected into the final joint statement released by the meeting participants.
  - ii. A number of publications were produced and disseminated during the project period, including key findings from the situation analysis, such as geo-intelligence map on trafficking routes; mapping institutional responsibilities between the three countries; analysis of international cooperative mechanisms between the three countries; analysis of the laws, regulations violated along the trafficking chain. In Viet Nam these publications were shared with law enforcement agencies, including Customs, Environment Police, Border Army, Forest Protection Department, Market Control Department, and Anti-Smuggling Committee at the national level and the provinces of Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Cao Bang in northern and Nghe An, Ha Tinh in central of Viet Nam. In Lao PDR these publications were shared to law enforcement agencies, including The Department of Forest inspections, Customs; Environmental Police; Border Army, at national level and provincial level in Bolikhamxay.

In China key findings from the situation analysis including the trade route situation, the species involved, suspected companies/individuals, and the existing cooperation mechanisms have all been shared through a presentation to the China CITES MA, Customs, Border Army, Anti-Smuggling Office, Forest Police, Ocean Guard at provincial level in Guangdong and Guangxi. The presentational materials have been shared among the agencies as well.

- b) International level dissemination: Based on the lessons learned and information gathered over the project period, WCS developed a series of international briefings for multiple audiences, including law enforcement personnel embedded in diplomatic missions in Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and China, INTERPOL and other organizations involved in combatting trafficking internationally such as the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) representatives. Knowledge, information and findings drew from this project have been used and adapted into supporting documentation shared by WCS delegates at the CITES CoP 17 to relevant government parties.

### **Component 3: Informed and active media (domestic & international), and local civil society groups on the issues of wildlife crimes**

Products / Deliverables 3.1. Chinese, Vietnamese and international journalist networks expanded by 20% (baseline of 280 journalists), managed (80 members of media network supported on wildlife crime stories per year), outputs (stories) tracked daily (from a baseline of 1,100 articles in 2013) and inaccurate or harmful information on wildlife trafficking corrected (roughly 1% of wildlife related articles).

Networks of 350 Vietnamese journalists and 35 Chinese journalists are currently managed by WCS Viet Nam and WCS China respectively, and regularly receive relevant news, briefing and updates about wildlife trade.

The press release of the trade chain mission was covered by 8 Vietnamese outlets, 3 Chinese and 2 Laotian outlets. The press release of the tri-lateral meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 in Guangzhou was covered in 6 Vietnamese, 8 Chinese, and 2 Laotian outlets. The press release of the China-Lao PDR bilateral workshop in July 2016 was shared on 2 government websites, and one government-owned media outlet in China. Both the CITES Secretariat and CITES CoP17 Twitter accounts reposted this news on their feeds.

An important element for building and maintaining political will is to generate public engagement and awareness of the issues involved in illegal wildlife trade. To promote such engagement, WCS China has created a journalist network that provides technical, logistical, editorial and financial support to journalists in China to facilitate the coverage of wildlife conservation issues via social and traditional media.

Since July 2015, WCS China has successfully secured over 100 Chinese language feature reports, press release publications and social media reports focused on the work of WCS and issues surrounding wildlife trafficking. WCS China has published 15 feature reports related to wildlife trafficking in national media during this project period, with a combined circulation of over four million. WCS China reported the Trade Chain Mission live on Twitter through 12 posts which generated 27,275 impression and 342 engagements in total. Popular account like CITES and World Wildlife Day have retweeted those messages. Meanwhile, 3 posts were shared on Facebook, which generated 367 total impression and 43 total engagement.

WCS Viet Nam also shared additional stories of interest to journalists during the project period. In November 2015, this resulted in the coverage by a Chinese journalist of ivory trade from Viet Nam to China. The article was translated into Vietnamese and shared to relevant law enforcement agencies including Environmental Police and the Viet Nam Forum of Environmental journalists.

During the project period, WCS Viet Nam identified two articles on Vietnamese media that delivered inaccurate and harmful information about wildlife conservation. The first one was about rhino species in Africa and Asia, released on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016; the second one was about the effectiveness of tiger glue and tiger penis according to traditional medicine, published on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016. WCS Viet Nam sent suggestions to correct the information to editors, and those articles were corrected following our suggestion.

Products / Deliverables 3.2. All project relevant news scans on illegal wildlife trade distributed and exchanged (monthly) among and/or across project countries in local languages.

WCS Viet Nam performed daily news scans to record all reports related to domestic and international wildlife crimes. WCS China also recorded major news related to this topic on a bi-weekly basis.

During the project period, WCS collected 2,574 Chinese, Vietnamese and international articles related to wildlife and wildlife trade issues. These articles were directly disseminated through a variety of networks to law enforcement partner agencies, journalist networks, social media platforms and email groups to conservation and policy stakeholders in the region.

Additionally, the most relevant articles were translated into English and shared to our international partners through WCS wildlife conservation network and English language social media accounts (including Twitter and Facebook). The primary sources of the news collected are located in the Asia region including Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and India.

**5. If you did not complete any component or deliverable, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?**

Not applicable

**6. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results**

**Benefits to Communities**

**7. Please describe the communities that have benefited from CEPF support**

*Please report on the size and characteristics of communities and the benefits that they have received, as a result of CEPF investment. Please provide information for all communities that have benefited **from project start to project completion**.*

| Community Name | Community Characteristics |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        | Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit |                |                  |                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                | Subsistence economy       | Small landowners | Indigenous/ ethnic peoples | Pastoralists / nomadic peoples | Recent migrants | Urban communities | Other* | Size of Community               |                |                  |                   | In | cr | In | cr | In | cr | In | cr | In | cr |
|                |                           |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        | 50-250 people                   | 251-500 people | 501-1,000 people | Over 1,001 people | -  | m  | -  | m  | -  | m  | -  | m  |    |    |
|                |                           |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        |                                 |                |                  |                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                |                           |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        |                                 |                |                  |                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                |                           |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        |                                 |                |                  |                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                |                           |                  |                            |                                |                 |                   |        |                                 |                |                  |                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

\*If you marked "Other" to describe the community characteristic, please explain:



## Lessons Learned

### **8. Describe any lessons learned related to organizational development and capacity building.**

1) Whilst WCS has carried out many regional-scale projects, those are generally characterized by country-specific activities with regional-scale lesson learning, and coordination. This project was somewhat unique as it consisted of a set of truly regional activities that involved all three countries. In the first year, this posed a challenge to our existing management structures and exposed prejudices held by our staff across the region towards other country programs. We learnt that through regular face-to-face meetings and conference calls, we were able to foster a greater understanding of the operating conditions in each country and the characteristics of our government relationships and also build trust and a friendship between our staff that enabled us to more effectively operate at this level. This project has paved the way for similarly designed projects in WCS and has supported a fundamental shift in how WCS addresses wildlife trafficking. We have recruited new positions to support this regionalization, tasked primarily with coordinating activities at this level.

2) WCS China faced technical barriers during the deployment of the intelligence analysis system (i2), which was aimed at composing information and intelligence gathered across three countries participating in the situation analysis. The project team has paid great efforts to understand the system through regional seminars and on-site learning from other country programs. Currently, through the collaboration with WCS teams in Viet Nam and Lao PDR, the China team is able to indirectly input data and request analysis. WCS has identified a solution to enable access to the China team that we are trialing now.

### **9. Describe any lessons learned related to project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)**

The project design team was ambitious in their estimates of how long approvals would take to implement the activities and to how unforeseen circumstances could delay activities. For example, we waited almost nine months before the Lao government would approve any activities, as they requested a specific amendment to our MoU. We have now created a more general MoU that spans five years with Lao to avoid this issue in the future; and our key partner in the Vn CITES MA left his position. Future project planning will build in greater time for approvals and planning, three years would have been a far more realistic project period and more could have been achieved.

### **10. Describe any lesson learned related to project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)**

Coordinating multi-agency activities in a single country is complex, organizing those with three countries and in multiple languages was even more complex, particularly given the ever-changing geo-political tensions between the three countries. We found that face-to-face communications between WCS staff was a critical way to plan and prepare for activities in addition to regular conference calls. Emails were insufficient.

### **11. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community**

Not applicable.

## **Sustainability / Replication**

### **12. Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated**

This project established several new communication channels and facilitated a substantially better understanding among law enforcement agencies of the three countries involved. Some of these agencies agreed to kick-start new forms of trans-border cooperation after realizing the tremendous impact that illegal wildlife trade has on the society and its cross-cutting nature with other international crimes.

One inspiring anecdote occurred during the China-Lao PDR CITES enforcement workshop in mid-July 2016. During the discussions section, a Chinese officer asked what department from Lao PDR is the counterpart of the Forestry Police in China. Although the Forestry Police had sent their delegates from the provincial level in China to the neighboring provinces of Lao PDR before, they are still confused in finding the right counterpart due to linguistic barriers and the different government systems. In some cases, it was revealed that Chinese law enforcement contacted the wrong departments in Lao PDR when trying to establish a cooperation on certain cases under investigation, which lead to no feedback from the Laotian side, thus affecting the outcomes of the case and impairing the trust in Lao PDR enforcement departments. Thanks to the assistance from WCS, all attendees to the meetings organized as part of this CEPF project were able to clearly identify their counterparts, and specifically the Department of Forestry Inspection (DOFI) of Lao PDR was able to finally develop closer ties at the provincial level with the Forestry Police of China. Officers from both departments immediately exchanged their contacts and discussed potential new communication and operating methods.

This anecdote strengthens our confidence that enhancing communication among enforcement agencies of three countries is an important step towards a more effective international counter wildlife trade approach. Thanks to our extended regional presence, WCS is now regarded as an important facilitator for fostering a tighter collaboration among national law enforcement agencies. We believe that experience gathered and the connections developed during this project period both with WCS and among the law enforcement agencies involved from China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam will continue to expand, replicate and strengthen further in the future as more cases of illegal wildlife trade surface are investigated.

### **13. Summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability**

## **Safeguards**

### **14. If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social and environmental safeguards that your project may have triggered**

n/a

## **Additional Funding**

**15. Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF investment**

| <b>Donor</b>                               | <b>Type of Funding*</b> | <b>Amount</b> | <b>Notes</b> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| The Blue Moon Foundation                   | A                       | \$25,000      |              |
| USFWS Rhino-Tiger Fund                     | A                       | \$80,000      |              |
| The Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation | A                       | \$125,000     |              |
| Arcus Foundation                           | A                       | \$150,000     |              |
| WCS Private Donors                         | A                       | \$119,000     |              |

*\* Categorize the type of funding as:*

- A Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*
- B Grantee and Partner Leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project)*
- C Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)*

## **Additional Comments/Recommendations**

**16. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF**

### **Information Sharing and CEPF Policy**

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

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