

Community Voices

10 October 2018

Zoological Society London, UK

Event Report

Community Voices

Local Perspectives on International Responses to Illegal
Wildlife Trade



Author information

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Group photo, Community Voices, October 2018 (Jonathan Perugia/Gaia Visual)

Overview

The London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT), representing the fourth in a series of high-level conferences seeking to increase international commitments to tackling the IWT, was held on 11 and 12 October 2018. This series of conferences – as well as various other regional and international policy forums – have increasingly recognised the important role of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities who live side by side wildlife in addressing IWT and numerous commitments have been made (see Annex) over the past five years.

Despite these commitments, the emphasis to date in IWT discussions and in implementation has been – and remains – strongly on strengthening government or private sector-led law enforcement. Scant emphasis has been placed on how to effectively engage the people who live alongside this globally-valued wildlife. And even less on actually listening to those communities and - as the outcome statement from the Kasane Conference in 2015 advocates – **reinforcing their voice as active stakeholders in this debate**.

Immediately prior to the London Conference, IIED, IUCN – SULi, FFI and ZSL partnered to organise an event that brought local community representatives to London, enabled them to share their experiences in tackling IWT with each other, and with a wide variety of support NGOs, donors and researchers, and prepare a joint message for the London Conference.

The event built on a long-standing partnership between IIED, IUCN-SULi and TRAFFIC who have worked together prior to two previous state-led IWT Conferences – in Kasane and Hanoi – to raise the profile of community voices. The **Beyond Enforcement Initiative**^{1 2} has documented the impacts of IWT (and efforts to combat it) on communities as well as numerous examples of community-led initiatives to tackle IWT.

The **Community Voices** event focussed on community perspectives of what works, what doesn't and why in terms of community engagement in combating IWT. In the morning, community representatives shared their experiences of different strategies for tackling IWT. In the afternoon, the community representatives held a closed session to reflect on the international commitments that have been made to date, the extent to which these have been implemented and the extent to which additional actions may be required. They agreed a set of key messages for the London Conference which were presented by Dickson Ole Kaelo, CEO of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association in the first panel session during the conference plenary on day one. A video of the panel session is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FgmECRYtcE>

The event was attended by 32 community representatives from 15 countries as well as 79 participants from community support NGOs, donor agencies and academia.

¹ www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/our-work/specialist-group-sustainable-use-and-livelihoods-suli/communities-and-illegal-wildlife-trade/beyond-enforcement-initiative

² www.iied.org/community-based-wildlife-management-tool-tackle-illegal-wildlife-trade

Agenda

The agenda for the day, detailing the presentations and discussion was designed to allow as many community representatives to speak as possible. All the presentations are available on IIED's SlideShare site (links provided within the agenda).

When	What	Who
8.30-9.00	Registration, collection of per diems (for sponsored participants)	
9.00	Morning session opens	Chair: Dilys Roe (IIED)
9.00-9.10	Welcome and introduction to the meeting	Dominic Jerney (Director-General, ZSL)
9.10-9.20	Introduction to the meeting	Rosie Cooney (Chair, IUCN-SULI)
9.20-9.30	International commitments on IWT and communities, including analysis of progress	Dilys Roe (IIED)
9.30-10.20	First panel: Community experiences: impacts of IWT and anti-IWT efforts on communities	Facilitator: Paul de Ornellas (ZSL) Panelists: Charles-Joseph Nsonkali (Cameroon) Saw Wee Eh Too (Myanmar) Davaakhuu Norovbanzad and Tumurkhuu Davaakhuu (Mongolia)
10.20–10.45	TEA BREAK	
10.45-11.00	A Theory of Change for Engaging Communities in Tackling IWT – four key pathways	Holly Dublin (IUCN-SULI)
11.00-12.00	Second panel: Empowering and incentivising communities in tackling IWT: ensuring the benefits exceed the costs	Facilitator: Rosie Cooney, (IUCN-SULI) Panelists George Wambura (Tanzania) Brisetha Hendricks/Asser Ndjitezeua (joint presentation) (Namibia) Prince Dipati Benjamin Maenetja (South Africa) Mama Mouamfon (Cameroon) Ramson Karmushu (Kenya)
12.00-1.00	Third panel: Community efforts and initiatives to tackle IWT	Facilitator: Rebecca Drury (FFI) Panelists Jackson Mbeke (DRC) Dil Raj Khanal (Nepal) Iswadi (Indonesia) Kabiru Olatubosun Abass (Nigeria)
1.00-1.15	Summary of key points – Dilys Roe (IIED)	
1.15-2.00	LUNCH	
After lunch participants will break into two parallel streams: Stream A: community representatives only; Stream B: support NGOs, donor agencies, researchers etc.		

Stream A (closed – community representatives only)		
2.00-2.15	Recap on the Commitments	Dilys Roe (IIED)
2.15-4.00	Facilitated discussion: Which commitments have been implemented (examples)? Which commitments have not been implemented, and why not (examples/evidence of lack of implementation)? What's missing - do we need further/different commitments? Do current ones need strengthening? Initial message developed on each of these.	Facilitator: Holly Dublin (IUCN-SULi)
Stream B: supporting effective community-level responses to IWT – open session		
2.00-2.15	Recap on the Commitments and Introduction to Working Groups	Rebecca Drury (FFI)
2.15-3.15	Working Groups: Which commitments have been implemented (examples)? Which commitments have not been implemented, why (examples)? What's missing from the commitments - how can they be strengthened? What are the priorities for implementation/next steps?	Facilitators Paul de Ornellas (ZSL), Rebecca Drury (FFI), Sarah Gluszek (FFI), Rob Small (FFI).
3.15-4.00	Stream B Plenary: Working Groups presentations and summary.	Paul de Ornellas (ZSL)
4.00-4.30	TEA BREAK	
4.30-5.15	PLENARY SESSION: Feedback from Stream A and B	Facilitator: Rosie Cooney (IUCN-SULi)
5.15-5.30	Closing reflections: Confirming community messages for the London Conference	Dickson Ole Kaelo (KWCA)
5.30	Event closes	

At the end of the day, the community representatives who had been invited to participate in a panel presentation at the London Conference (Dickson Ole Kaelo (Kenya), Khalil Karimov (Tajikistan) and Clara Lucia Sierra Diaz (Colombia) attended a reception at St James Palace where they met Prince Harry – who they reported back as being very knowledgeable about community engagement!

Community Statement to the London Conference on IWT 2018

Full statement

There has been some good progress in meeting some of the IWT Conferences commitments in some countries. In other countries there has been little progress and/or major failures of implementation.

One of the most important commitments is to support community-led conservation – this requires good legal/policy frameworks that give clear rights and benefits to local communities, plus practical measures to operationalize these.

In some countries there are clear and strong legal and policy frameworks that recognise and support community rights to land and to manage and sustainably use wildlife, and these are paying off in terms of mobilizing community support for conservation. In other countries, however, communities receive no benefits from conservation. Some countries have no legal or policy frameworks to recognise and support community conservation. Some governments retain all rights over land and wildlife themselves, and fail to devolve genuine rights to communities.

This is fundamentally hindering the engagement of communities in combating IWT, and this is undermining efforts to combat poaching and IWT.

Other countries do have strong policy and legal frameworks, but there are critical weaknesses in implementing them, making them operational and practical, and communicating them to communities. Community conservation is not clearly enough supported and integrated into broader strategies like NBSAPs and SDG action plans.

There is a critical and crucial need for greater incentives and benefits for communities to conserve wildlife on their land or in adjoining wildlife areas.

The private sector typically is more powerful than the rural community sector, and gets priority over community interest.

To genuinely support community-led conservation – governments need to recognise, value and use indigenous and local knowledge and expertise. This is a crucial gap in the IWT commitments and should be added.

Sometimes the conservation messaging of NGOs obscures understanding of the real economic and political aspects of conservation, and the need for local people to benefit from wildlife if they are to support conservation.

All too often governments are more influenced by external interests from outside their countries rather than by their own constituencies.

Summary statement: presented to the London Conference

You cannot save wildlife without the support of the indigenous peoples and the local communities who steward most of the world's wildlife. A quarter of the world's land area is owned or managed by communities – more than double the area of national parks.

We are the people who are the most affected by the illegal wildlife trade and can be the most powerful force to address this problem. But this will only happen if communities are empowered and can benefit from wildlife.

Far too little attention and funding are being directed to implementing the commitments governments have made to communities to involve them as partners in conservation. This is undermining global efforts to combat poaching.

Critical commitments from governments are also missing. For the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade to be successful, it is vital that governments:

- Recognise and guarantee community rights to land and to manage and benefit from wildlife.
- Give status to indigenous and local knowledge in equal measure to scientific knowledge for conserving wild species in the face of combatting the illegal wildlife trade and broader conservation threats.
- Include and give an equal voice to communities in international meetings like this and recognise us as equal partners in conserving our wildlife on our land.



At the London Conference on IWT 2018 (Jonathan Perugia/Gaia Visual)

Feedback on the event

We reproduce here some of the emails we have had from community representatives following the event. It was a lot of hard work to organise, but emails like this make it all worthwhile!

“On behalf of the entire community voices team, I voice my utmost appreciation for the logistics support from Francesca, the leadership of Dilys, Rosie, Holly, and the entire IIED, ZSL, FFI, IUCN SULi, DEFRA and all the partners who funded community participants to attend the community voices event and the IWT conference. In Kiswahili we say Asante Sana and in Maasai we say Ashe Oleng.

The event was very well organized, the logistics clear and helpful and indeed the learning was beyond any of us could have imagined. We attended the Opening ceremony at St James Palace, we met Prince Harry and other dignitaries, we heard powerful speeches from world leaders, and most of all we made friends and partners especially with our colleagues from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our community panel, the first in the entire conference, was well attended and allocated an unusual 75 minutes, our stakeholder event and the community voices provided us with an opportunity to share our experience and to rally the call on the need for proactive rather than reactive efforts to contain the IWT scourge.

We exchanged contacts with our community representatives and made a declaration shared at the conference proposing areas of new commitments. We sang various songs in our bus and had many side discussions on what we are each working in our respective areas. We resolved we will continue the dialogue beyond the conference through our whatsapp group and in fact considered holding, if funds could be found, a community representatives post conference session to take forward our collective agenda focusing on IWT and the underlying drivers such as land use change, habitat loss, human wildlife conflict and the role of indigenous and local community in providing solutions. We hope and welcome all of you in this effort and even more importantly in ensuring future such conferences mainstream the voices of the communities that live with wildlife.

Pledges and commitments were made, its only vital that as a team we reflect on how to make the most out of it including being a recipient of the funds pledged on the war to fight IWT. We discussed concern that just more boots, guns, high tech devices or jail sentences are key but insufficient and that the same efforts can jeopardise the war on wildlife loss. I can only hope half of the funds pledged could be invested with local community action, with less we can achieve more.

I therefore wish to express my utmost thanks to all of you and all those behind the scene for a job well done and pray that our partnership will continue”

“I would like to join... and thank you all, for all you have done during these months to make this IWT for communities happen. It was really amazing work and very well organized. It was a big pleasure to be part of this and I am sure it is just «beginning».”

“It was a pleasure meeting you at the IWT conference in London and our discussion on the opportunities for collaboration on our community led wildlife conservation activities... I am back in Nigeria and have discussed my experiences with our community and organization. I look forward to further collaborations with you and your organizations.”

“Herewith, receive my sincere appreciation for organizing a truly rich experience for community representatives and for your tireless efforts of advocacy to have community voices heard at such high-level platforms. If we have reached just one, it was plenty.”

Annex 1: International commitments on communities and IWT

Theme	London 2014	Kasane 2015	Hanoi 2016
Tackling negative impacts of IWT	Recognise the negative impact of illegal wildlife trade on sustainable livelihoods and economic development.		
Supporting sustainable livelihood opportunities	Increase capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities and eradicate poverty.		
Supporting community led conservation	Initiate or strengthen collaborative partnerships among local, regional, national and international development and conservation agencies to enhance support for community led wildlife conservation.	Support work by countries and intergovernmental organisations, as well as nongovernmental organisations, that seeks to identify the situations where, and the mechanisms by which, actions at the local level, including with community groups, can reduce the illegal wildlife trade.	
Involving local people as law enforcement partners	Work with, and include local communities in, establishing monitoring and law enforcement networks in areas surrounding wildlife.		The active participation of local people is critical to effective monitoring and law enforcement as well as sustainable socio-economic development.
Supporting wildlife-based livelihoods/benefits		Promote the retention of benefits from wildlife resources by local people where they have traditional and/or legal rights over these resources (eg strengthen policy and legislative frameworks, reinforce the voice of local people, and implement measures which balance the need to tackle the illegal wildlife trade with the needs of communities).	Sustainable livelihoods are most likely to be secured with the engagement of relevant community groups and the appropriate retention of benefits from wildlife for local people surrounding protected areas.
Supporting information sharing about community-based approaches		Establish, facilitate and support information-sharing mechanisms, within country, regionally, and internationally, designed with, for and targeted at local people and practitioners, to develop knowledge, expertise and best practice in practical experience of involving local people in managing wildlife resources, and in action to tackle the illegal wildlife trade.	
Reducing the costs of living with wildlife		Support work done in countries to address the challenges that people, in particular rural populations, can face in living and coexisting with wildlife, with the goal of building conservation constituencies and promoting sustainable development.	

The London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) took place on 11 to 12 October 2018. It was the fourth in a series of high-level conferences seeking to increase international commitments to tackling the IWT. Despite formal commitments to recognise the important role of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities who live side-by-side wildlife in reducing IWT, the emphasis to date remains strongly on strengthening government or private sector-led law enforcement.

For this reason, immediately prior to the London Conference, IIED, IUCN-SULi, FFI and ZSL partnered to organise an event that brought local community representatives to London, enabled them to share their experiences in tackling IWT with each other, and with a wide variety of support-NGOs, donors and researchers.

The event was called Community Voices: Local Perspectives on International Responses to Illegal Wildlife Trade. This report gives a short overview of the event and presents the Community Statement on Tackling the Illegal Wildlife Trade prepared for the London Conference.



Event Materials

Biodiversity; Natural resource management

Keywords:

Illegal wildlife trade, wildlife crime, poaching, community-based approaches



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