



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN THE CONGO BASIN



REPUBLIC OF CONGO – 2004: Elephants in Central Africa are targeted for their ivory. CARPE's support for anti-poaching helps disrupt wildlife trafficking networks.
Photo by © Remi Pognante for USAID

OVERVIEW

Across the Central African watershed of the Congo River, animals are being killed at an alarming rate. Many are taken to supply a lucrative black market dominated by international buyers. The most visible trade is in ivory, which is decimating elephant populations. Poachers, many of them part of well-organized and heavily armed groups with ties to crime syndicates, are killing an average of one elephant every 15 seconds.

But poaching is just part of the picture. Many other animals – large and small – are killed to provide meat for people living in the forest, and to supply the steady demand of markets in towns and cities. This “bushmeat” harvesting is taking an equally heavy toll on the environment, with an estimated 5 million tons harvested from the Congo Basin each year.

Hunting is regulated by laws, allowing hunting for some forest animals in certain places at particular times. Having laws, though, requires proper management and enforcement. Unfortunately, these legal restrictions are often flouted, with widespread corruption and weak enforcement and judicial systems resulting in little risk of being caught or punished.

Without proper action, the combined impact of poaching and illegal hunting threatens to wipe out entire species. But affecting real and sustainable change requires recognizing and understanding the drivers behind wildlife trafficking. It means equipping government partners in the region with the knowledge, training and tools to tackle poaching and illegal hunting. It also involves working with forest-dwelling communities and urban populations to reduce demand for bushmeat, and to develop alternative livelihoods and new systems for conserving the forest's rich biodiversity.

CARPE at a Glance

The Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is a long-term initiative of the United States Government to promote sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation in the Congo Basin through increased local, national and regional natural resource management capacity.

CARPE has been implemented in three phases:

CARPE Phase I (1995-2002) built a natural resources information base for the region, and developed local capacity, through a small grants program focused on three themes: forestry, protected area management, and environmental governance.

CARPE Phase II (2003-2012) implemented systematic land use planning to support forest and biodiversity conservation needs, and established partnerships and activities to create sustainable conservation management systems and climate change mitigation.

CARPE Phase III (2012-2020) is “institutionalizing” the conservation monitoring and management approaches developed in CARPE II by building individual, organizational and systems capacity necessary to ensure that the ecological integrity of the humid forest ecosystem of the Congo Basin can be sustained without USAID support.

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN THE CONGO BASIN

Through its Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), USAID, in close coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is working to combat wildlife crime in the region by building the capacity of relevant authorities, from planners and managers to park rangers and prosecutors, and by helping communities to protect biodiversity through campaigns and partnerships to reduce demand for wildlife products.

USAID is working with the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo (ROC), and program-implementing partners, to develop wildlife strategies and laws across eight key Congo Basin landscapes.

A key element of this approach involves introducing effective management and land use plans, and improved mapping and monitoring approaches, which in turn increase the effectiveness of patrols and law enforcement.

This improved management of protected areas, complemented by more accurate monitoring – both on the ground and using state-of-the-art satellite imagery – allows officials to see and react to both imminent threats and long-term changes. It is complemented by better training, with USAID's implementing partners in each landscape working to improve security, surveillance, law enforcement and judiciary systems.

USAID is also partnering with local communities to increase their awareness, engagement and sense of ownership of the forests around them. This includes establishing new approaches to land management, such as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), and public-private partnerships (PPP).

CBNRM is a key pillar of USAID's CARPE strategy. Many Congo Basin communities, facing extreme isolation, economic collapse, and poorly organized and uncompetitive agricultural markets, often turn to unsustainable harvesting of the forest resources around them, including illegal bushmeat hunting.

CBNRM combines conservation objectives and economic development. It recognizes that people will work harder to protect and preserve the resources around them if they

USAID and the Fight Against Wildlife Trafficking

In July 2013, President Obama issued an Executive Order to Combat Wildlife Trafficking, which led to a U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, and the subsequent implementation plan that is mobilizing resources across the U.S. Government to address this important challenge.

The National Strategy has three strategic priorities:

1. Strengthening enforcement, in the U.S. and overseas
2. Reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, in the U.S. and overseas
3. Building international cooperation, commitment and public-private partnerships

To help achieve these goals, USAID is starting more than 35 new projects in 15 countries, including two new activities in the Congo Basin region, to combat wildlife trafficking, joining more than 30 ongoing programs that advance the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

These new projects extend USAID's legacy of conservation work, including strengthening wildlife law enforcement, reducing demand for illegal wildlife products, and building international cooperation and partnerships



WESTERN REPUBLIC OF CONGO ON THE BATÉKÉ PLATEAU – 2015:
A patrol mission confiscated 380kg of bushmeat from one vehicle.
Photo by Arthur Sniegon, PALF for USAID

can see that it will improve their quality of life; and that when people's quality of life is enhanced, their efforts and commitment to ensuring the future well-being of those resources are increased.

CBNRM is providing forest-dwelling people in the Congo Basin, often for the first time ever, with real and tangible reasons for protecting their local biodiversity. It provides them with the incentives for maintaining healthy ecosystems for themselves, and for keeping poachers and other illegal activities at bay.

PPPs are another innovative USAID approach, integrating ideas, efforts and resources of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses and civil society to stimulate growth, develop workforces and address environmental issues. USAID is working with government and NGO partners to develop PPPs for its Congo landscapes, including a recent PPP between one of its landscape partners and the ROC government designed to introduce a new, innovative management structure in a national park to improve engagement, resource monitoring and law enforcement capabilities.

USAID is also increasing community involvement by promoting environmental awareness, education and participation. This involves supporting local communities in the management of natural resources and infrastructure development, including finalizing and implementing land use plans, ensuring they play a lead role, and that they participate in, and benefit from, REDD+¹ opportunities.

A second key element of USAID's approach to counter trafficking is increasing capacities to curtail illegal activities in protected areas and bushmeat transportation routes using a CARPE-wide wildlife crime strategy. This includes local approaches, such as increasing law enforcement capacity and reach, introducing new technologies and improving judicial mechanisms to effectively prosecute and jail convicted offenders. And it includes regional approaches, such as trans-border enforcement, working with new NGO networks, and regional organizations to align country strategies, policies and goals.

¹ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stock



REPUBLIC OF CONGO – 2002: Eco-guards at a road check searching for illegal trafficking of protected species. Photo by David Wilkie for USAID

To bolster law enforcement capabilities, USAID is providing new patrol vehicles, reporting, monitoring and camping equipment, supplies and food rations, all of which play a significant role in ensuring the security of eco-guards and rangers, and in motivating them to spend more time actively patrolling protected areas.

USAID is also supporting the deployment of SMART² technology, which is rolling out in CARPE's eight supported landscapes, along with technical and law enforcement training and informant networks. SMART is getting patrols in the right place at the right time, providing invaluable, real-time data on wildlife presence in key areas, and on the tools and practices used by poachers, which are critical for addressing threats on the ground. It enables park authorities to improve patrol effectiveness by concentrating on high-intensity poaching areas, apprehending poachers at entry and exit points, and arresting and turning them over for prosecution.

In ROC, USAID is working with a law enforcement agency to track bushmeat transportation, arrest poachers and bushmeat transporters and turn perpetrators over to the

² Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool

authorities. This work is complemented by partnerships with a network of NGOs, including the EAGLE³ network, the Project for the Application of Law for Fauna (PALF) and the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA), which are dedicated to ensuring wildlife laws are proactively enforced.

USAID is also improving the effectiveness of existing judicial systems by training rangers and magistrates to promote the implementation of environmental legislation, and strengthening the legal monitoring of wildlife crime in courts to ensure that those arrested are brought to justice. The third key and final element of USAID's approach to combating wildlife trafficking is aimed at reducing the drivers behind bushmeat consumption. To achieve this, USAID is working with local communities to develop alternative livelihoods and economic activities, including carbon revenues, and with commercial interests, such as logging and mining companies, to develop innovative approaches to reduce pressure on forest resources.

USAID is introducing improved agricultural practices and better market access, providing micro-loans to raise small livestock and establish fish ponds as alternative sources of protein and to increase food security and generate income, and promoting tourism. It is also supporting communities in complying with zoning plans and pathways of sustainable wood energy production, including village plantations and producing improved cooking stoves.

It is partnering with logging companies, local communities and government ministries to implement anti-poaching policies, and in zoning selected areas as no-hunting and local-hunting-only to prevent bushmeat transport. And it is exploring strategies to supply local people with alternative food sources, such as working with logging companies to import provisions, where necessary.

USAID's combined approach is changing the trafficking landscape in the Congo Basin. Increased capacity, materials and patrol numbers have significantly expanded the reach and effectiveness of law enforcement, with encouraging results in reducing the poaching of key species in almost every landscape. Using improved technologies, including satellite imagery and SMART, has dramatically improved mapping and monitoring. And community engagement is introducing sustainable livelihoods, economic hope and forest stewardship in key areas.

All of these efforts have proven particularly effective in reducing the poaching of key species in at least two landscapes: Sangha Tri-National, which straddles the borders of the ROC, Cameroon and the Central Africa Republic; and Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru, located in central DRC.

Although much more remains to be done, the foundations and partnerships are now in place to address and reduce the unchecked killing of the animals of the Congo watershed, and for achieving USAID's primary objective of maintaining the ecological integrity of the humid forest ecosystem of the Congo Basin through sustainable land management.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2014: With USAID's help, eco-guards are combating wildlife trafficking. In a recent operation, weapons and ivory were confiscated in the Salonga landscape. Photo by Jonas Abana Eriksson for USAID

For more information:
www.carpe.umd.edu
CARPEManagement@usaid.gov

³ Eco-Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement