THE ISSUE

Wildlife resources are economically important and critical natural heritage in Tanzania. The country dedicates over 25% of its land surface to wildlife protected area networks (National Parks, Conservation Areas, Game Reserves, and Game Controlled Areas). Despite various efforts to conserve wildlife, iconic species such as the African elephant and rhinoceros are being poached to near extinction, causing systemic and tangible devastation to global biodiversity resources. Tanzania has previously been called “the epicentre of Africa’s elephant poaching crisis” after a government census revealed loss of a catastrophic 60% of its elephants between 2009-2014.

Wildlife poaching and the illegal trafficking of wildlife products is negatively affecting both ecosystems and the socio-economic development of the country through its impact on the tourism sector. To effectively fight poaching, further efforts are needed to strengthen the financial and technical capacity of the relevant authorities as well as enhancing the collaboration amongst key stakeholders. Increased involvement of communities, especially those living in protected areas, is central in the fight against poaching.

THE RESPONSE

The project will support the Government of Tanzania in implementing the National Strategy to Combat Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade (NSCPIWT) by strengthening legislation and capacity to tackle poaching and wildlife trafficking at the national level. It will also enhance the collaboration to fight illegal wildlife trade between Tanzania and neighbouring countries, which is in alignment with the objectives of the overall Global Wildlife Programme, launched in 2015 by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

At the landscape level, the project will contribute to strengthening the capacity of tasking and coordination groups, improve multi-institutional collaboration and increase the level of cooperation with local communities, businesses and NGOs in nine targeted ecosystems.

The project will facilitate increased involvement of local communities in wildlife enforcement and monitoring activities, and address the need for enhanced sustainable livelihood opportunities to reduce dependency on vulnerable habitats and wildlife within the Ruaha-Rungwa ecosystem of southern Tanzania.

The project will have a strong knowledge management and communication component. Lessons learned through project implementation will be made available nationally and internationally, and a campaign will be undertaken to raise awareness on issues relevant to biodiversity conservation and wildlife crime among targeted audiences.
The overall objective of the project is to strengthen conservation of globally threatened wildlife in Tanzania. Thus, the project will contribute directly to the achievement of the country’s obligations under several international conventions, including those supported through the GEF mechanisms (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as well as environmental sustainability in Tanzania.

The project will invest considerable resources in institutional sustainability. This will be done through improvement of enforcement frameworks, long-term protection across targeted ecosystems, the establishment of operational tasking and coordination groups and development of inter-agency collaboration.

Successful implementation of the project could spark an interest among other donors and enhance financial sustainability of project outcomes. By building the capacity of stakeholders (law enforcement officers and local communities), the project will ensure continued implementation and serve as a successful prototype for replication at national, regional and international levels.

Overall, the project is expected to improve local community livelihoods and wellbeing through development of community managed Wildlife Management Areas in critical ecosystems.