



Wildlife Trust of India International Fund for Animal Welfare

Photo credit: International Fund for Animal Welfare

Summary

Wildlife Crime Prevention Training is a capacity building training program designed to enable frontline forest guards across India to understand and deal with wildlife crime in their areas of work. The course is designed for forest guides to understand:

1. The wildlife crime scenario in their geographical area – what is hunted, why, by whom, when, and how;
2. The methods and techniques of various criminal gangs;
3. The provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and powers vested in them under the Act; and
4. The investigation and documentation of wildlife offences at the ground level.

Learning Question Addressed:

What are examples of institutional arrangements, such as dedicated units or embed programs, that improved the capacity of enforcement or prosecution staff?

Problem

Guards in India's protected areas are often recruited and put to work without basic training on law enforcement. Without an understanding of the law and the power given to them under the law, guards are not able to discharge their duties successfully. Basic training on the law is needed, as well as instruction in other law enforcement activities such as intelligence gathering, planning and taking part in operations, preparation of on-site legal documents, and executing the successful arrest of a suspect. Many guards come to the job without an awareness of the wildlife crime scenarios in the region, the wildlife products commonly traded, or devices and methods used for hunting.

Approach

Forest guards are the front line of protection for wildlife. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) - Wildlife Trust of India team plans a needs assessment before every training by visiting the park and interacting with the park officials at various levels.

This includes one-on-one interaction with randomly selected forest guards to understand their field work and duties. A lawyer analyzes wildlife crime cases prepared by members of the target group to help IFAW - Wildlife Trust of India better understand the group's knowledge level. Once the training needs are assessed, a tailored course curriculum is prepared. Professional trainers with excellent



Forest guards return to base camp after training.

field knowledge use appropriate methods, either theoretical or practical, to meet the needs of the group. Following completion of the course, regular legal assistance is made available. A lawyer from the program is available twice a month at the park office to help forest officials prepare

cases registered under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Each staff member selected for the training is required to attend the full three-year training cycle as long as they remain working at the site.

Results

The program started training in two tiger reserves in Pench and Kanha in central India in 2012. Park officials are now receiving pro-conservation judgments from the trial courts in cases of wildlife crime. These judgments are thought to be due to the improved quality of documentation from the field level.

Overall, there has been a major improvement in documentation with the inclusion of quality evidence and clear case statements related to sections of the Act. The program has also seen an increase in crime detection by frontline staff and better handling of these cases. Some trainees are now able to teach their team members, thereby building secondary level of capacity within the park.

Because the judicial process can take years to reach convictions, it may take few more years before the final results can be seen, but initial trends are encouraging.

About this case study series: In 2017, USAID collected [case studies](#) addressing the questions posed in the [Combating Wildlife Trafficking Learning Agenda](#). The finalists represent both USAID-funded and non-USAID-funded activities from around the world. The information provided in the case study series does not necessarily represent the views or positions of USAID or the U.S. Government.

Lessons

- **Trust-building between the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is an important factor in successful training.** Trust building is a cyclical process where the quality and effectiveness of the training can produce long lasting results and working relationships between parties.
- **Follow-up legal assistance provided to the parks is a crucial element that gives frontline staff and park officials the legal aid they need.** The support of lawyers in every trial ensures the cases are stronger and boosts the morale of the officers as they see more favorable judgments such as bail rejections or the jailing of suspects. The working relationship between civil society and NGOs is also improved as NGOs support the officials in critical crime cases.
- **Trainings need to be given by the right person, be desired by the trainees, and encourage institutionalization of knowledge.** Successful trainings need instructors with hands-on expertise who speak the local language. Each trainee should undergo four pieces of training: initial training, first refresher, second refresher, and evaluation to complete the process. Random workshops or unplanned training on wildlife crime management does not produce desired results in the field.
- **Boosting morale of frontline staff is important.** This can be achieved by providing insurance for staff killed or disabled on duty; providing needed equipment such as boots, raincoats, and tents; and increasing the staff's perception of their impact by enabling effective prosecution of criminals. Needs assessments can also help identify specific opportunities to boost morale.
- **An operational network of committed informants is necessary to curbing crime, but is not always feasible when staff capacity is low.** At first, staff were not equipped to cultivate an intelligence network, so the project focused first on intelligence gathering, collation, and analysis to disrupt syndicates. Once staff gained the capabilities, they could cultivate and manage informant networks.

To learn more about Wildlife Trust of India, visit: <http://www.wti.org.in>