

## CMP - CCNet Conservation Case Study Template

**Case Study Title:** Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) – *with an adaptive approach*

**Authors:** Philippa Dyson, TRAFFIC

**Contact Person:** Philippa Dyson, [philippa.dyson@traffic.org](mailto:philippa.dyson@traffic.org)

**Location:** Global

**Summary:** The USAID Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) Partnership brings together government, conservation and air transport stakeholders to formally collaborate on tackling wildlife trafficking in aviation supply chains. This case study shows how inter-agency collaboration can work to address a very complex conservation issue, and how adaptive management can be applied to such initiatives to increase success.

**Public Overview (Web Post) of Case Study:**

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/XC0Jf7yoSppBy/>

**Setting the Scene:** The illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion US Dollar global business which exploits legal transport supply chains. Airports act as bottlenecks as trafficked wildlife moves between countries and continents. Due to the sheer number of people working within airports and seaports, there is an opportunity for mass intervention against wildlife trafficking through individual staff efforts to detect and report incidents to law enforcement.

**Assess** In January 2015 a ‘collaborative action planning’ workshop was held, supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which aimed to identify and assess priorities for tackling wildlife trafficking through multi-stakeholder cooperation. During this workshop, stakeholders discussed the gaps, weaknesses and opportunities within transport supply chains in preventing wildlife trafficking. One of the outcomes was the establishment of the ROUTES Partnership, which commenced in October 2015. At the heart of ROUTES is a core group of partners collaborating with the U.S. Government and the transport sector that includes Airports Council International (ACI), the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), TRAFFIC and WWF.

**Plan** Based on the issues identified in the workshop, the ROUTES Partnership’s initial theory of change (TOC) was that if information was made available on trends in wildlife trafficking in air transport and communicated to industry, then corporate leaders would commit to taking action, including institutionalising training on how to detect and report wildlife trafficking; strengthening industry-level and company-level policies; encouraging compliance and action down the supply chain; and raising awareness at ground level. If a selection of these engaged corporate leaders took this action, then awareness and action would be stimulated across the industry and gradually a change in behaviour would be seen at ground level, in increased detection and reporting of wildlife trafficking incidents to law enforcement. If this occurred, then eventually the end goal would be achieved: a reduced use of legal transport supply chains for wildlife trafficking.

**Implement** Over the first two years the ROUTES core team designed and implemented strategic activities to achieve these changes, through five objectives focusing on data analytics, corporate engagement, staff training, strengthening industry policies and raising awareness. The combination of expertise and leadership among the partners, in both wildlife trafficking issues and air transport infrastructures, enabled an informed and appropriate strategy for engaging the sector. The Partnership worked with a comprehensive monitoring,

evaluation and learning plan and each year reviewed progress towards targets to inform the development of approaches and activities.

**Analyse** After two years of implementation, an internal evaluation was conducted to ‘pause and reflect’ on the overall progress made and determine key priorities for the second half of the partnership. This collaborative evaluation process revealed important areas which needed attention to strengthen progress towards objective targets and the overall goal. Continued discussion and reflection in the following months led to the conclusion that the ROUTES results chain was missing a key component: strengthening relationships between the transport sector and law enforcement. Due to a general lack of communication between the transport sector and law enforcement, there was little incentive within the transport sector to take action to support law enforcement on wildlife trafficking; furthermore, there was little ability to report to law enforcement at the airport level since reporting protocols were rarely in place. Therefore, even if all other objectives of ROUTES’ strategy were met, the ultimate increase in reporting would not occur.

**Adapt** To address this, the partners developed a new component of the TOC: if mechanisms were established to enable and encourage the transport sector and law enforcement to collaborate, then they would be incentivised to act. If this occurred, then an enabling environment would be built within airports for regular communications and safe reporting, thereby bridging the gap between transport and law enforcement and achieving the goal of the Partnership.

Working together, the Partnership adapted the overall ROUTES results chain to incorporate this new objective, and at the following annual work planning meeting built new activities into the strategy to address the issue, including raising awareness of the need for communication between law enforcement and transport stakeholders and identifying mechanisms to do this. The partners are now implementing these activities and exciting results are being seen!

**Why is this project important?** Wildlife trafficking has a range of environmental, financial and health impacts. The recent outbreak of the zoonotic disease COVID-19 demonstrates the devastating impact that diseases linked to wildlife trade (legal or illegal) can have across the globe. Compounding this, as a serious transnational crime, wildlife trafficking is known to be linked with corruption and other crimes involving a range of players within diverse geographical and socio-political contexts. It therefore requires a multi-agency and adaptable response.

Increasingly, effective conservation requires the buy in and involvement of the private sector for truly significant and sustainable results, in both this context and others. We share this case study to give an example of how an inter-agency collaboration can work to address a very complex issue, and also how adaptive management can be applied to such initiatives to increase success.

**Results and Lessons Learned:** Key accomplishments for the ROUTES Partnership have so far included becoming established as a main of support and resources for the industry, helping many airlines and airports take action. Wildlife trafficking prevention now has a long-term presence in industry policies and strategies: the ACI Europe Sustainability Strategy for Airports now incorporates wildlife trafficking prevention, and similar considerations are incorporated into a peer-led airport assessment programme; the IATA Environmental Assessment Programme (IEnvA) now includes a component on wildlife trafficking, against which three airlines have now been successfully assessed. As part of the new strategy, key stakeholders in transport, customs and law enforcement are coming together to develop automated detection software for wildlife in airport screening systems, and an app has been developed for transport staff to report wildlife trafficking to law enforcement.

An ongoing challenge the partners have faced has been how to progress from industry awareness and understanding of the issue to meaningful and sustainable action, when policies, practices and resources are already focused on other priorities in air transport such as explosives and dangerous weapons, climate change and human trafficking. Through its monitoring, evaluation and learning system, the ROUTES Partnership has continually learned lessons on the various enabling factors and barriers to engaging the sector and has adapted approaches accordingly.

The major challenge, as described in this case study, was how to build the relationship between transport stakeholders and law enforcement. However, the collaborative and reflective approach taken throughout ROUTES has enabled the Partnership to overcome this challenge. A number of lessons have been learned:

- 1) When aiming for target stakeholders to make changes in their operations or behaviour, their needs and motivations need to be thoroughly understood. Different stakeholder groups have different priorities and the costs and benefits of making such changes will be different to each group. Having representation of each stakeholder group within the Partnership ensured that strategies were aligned with these priorities and took stakeholder motivations into account.
- 2) When working on a continually evolving issue, and in such a complex and variable environment such as the air transport supply chain, implementers need great flexibility in terms of both the implementation approach and the overall TOC and strategy. This requires close monitoring and purposeful, open-minded reflection, and the flexibility to adapt approaches if needed.
- 3) Basing strategies on an agreed and clearly presented TOC keeps all project partners aware of the end goal and the logical pathway towards it. It aids evaluation and critical, objective discussion, which reduces any bias towards particular activities.
- 4) Making major changes to a strategy requires a significant time to design and agree the changes and finally to integrate them into the existing strategy. There are likely to be restrictions regarding the timing of the changes due to partners' external demands and also donor requirements for approving adaptations to TOCs, strategies and work plans, so these should be taken into account.

**Application beyond Case:** The work implemented under the ROUTES Partnership has excellent potential to be expanded across more of the air transport sector or adapted for implementation in other transport sectors. The overall TOC behind the Partnership – using evidence to engage a stakeholder group and inform action, and to achieve sustainable change through providing enabling resources as well as incentives for stakeholder action – would be applicable to many projects. The lessons learned could benefit many conservation and development initiatives, particularly those with a private sector focus and/or which operate in a highly variable environment.

Adapting the Partnership's approach according to industry needs and motivations has been critical for strengthening progress towards the goal. Building strong monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, including intentional reflection, into project proposals and planning is key for enabling this kind of adaptive management.

#### **Further Information:**

About the ROUTES Partnership: <https://routespartnership.org>

ACI World blog on wildlife trafficking and its work with ROUTES:

<https://blog.aci.aero/breaking-the-wildlife-trafficking-supply-chain-how-airports-can-help-sustain-wildlife-on-earth/>

IATA website page on wildlife trafficking resources and information developed with ROUTES: <https://www.iata.org/en/policy/environment/wildlife-trafficking/#tab-2>

**Key Words:** Copy the following table and tick the themes that apply to your case study. This is not meant to be a restrictive list - case studies that range beyond these themes are most welcome! This table does not count against your 3-4 page limit.

<b>Key Words (select all that are relevant)</b>	<b>Put x if Relevant</b>
<b>Stages in Conservation Standards Cycle</b>	
- Assess	X
- Plan	X
- Implement	X
- Analyze & Adapt	X
- Share	
- Full cycle adaptive management	
- Other _____	
<b>Case Study Scale</b>	
- Project-level	x
- Program-level	
- Organizational-level	
- Other _____	
<b>Specific Topics Addressed:</b>	
- Human wellbeing	
- Climate change	
- Community-based conservation	
- Indigenous populations	
- Marine conservation	x
- Freshwater conservation	x
- Terrestrial conservation	x
- Other: Wildlife trafficking _____	x