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Biodiversity Technical Brief

MEASURING IMPACT REWARDS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ANTI-POACHING AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING



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OVERVIEW

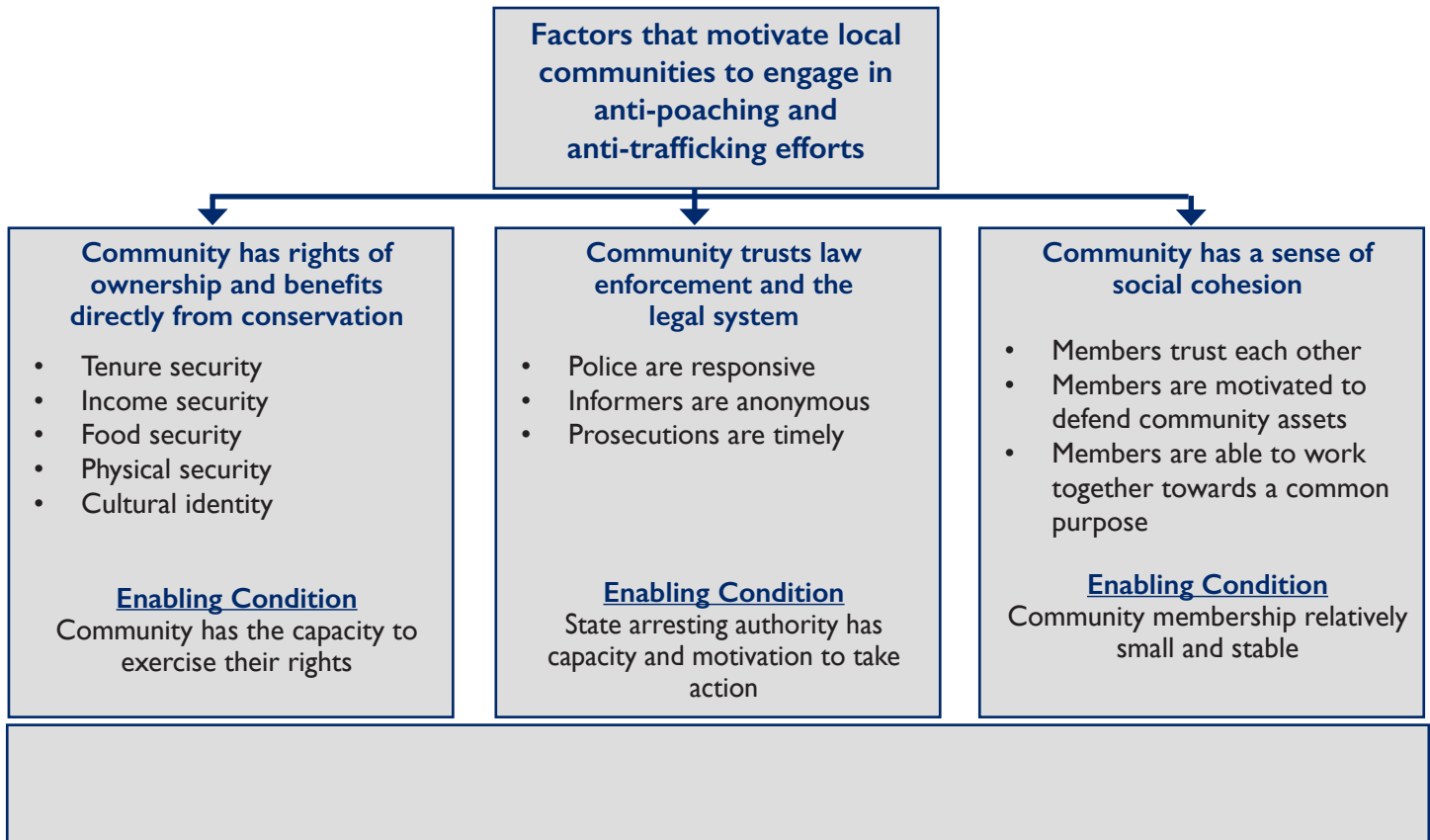
As demand for wildlife products drives an increase in prices, poaching and trafficking are becoming more militarized and connected to organized criminal gangs. Although communities have long been effective in regulating the behavior of their own members, should they help detect and prevent crimes associated with the illegal wildlife trade? Results of this study suggest strongly that community engagement in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts is not only feasible but desirable because it can reduce crime and improve citizen security. Many factors influence when communities might or might not be motivated to engage in efforts that reduce or halt wildlife poaching and trafficking. In some situations, community engagement in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts creates an unacceptable risk. This summary includes a set of the most important factors that conservation practitioners need to consider when assessing the risks and rewards of engaging communities in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts.

FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE OR DEMOTIVATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A review of the conservation and urban crime literature identified a series of key factors that influence community engagement in wildlife crime enforcement. Community engagement can take a variety of forms, from intelligence gathering (e.g., reporting crime, providing information) to participation in crime prevention and law enforcement operations, to serving as a witness during criminal trials.

Anti-poaching and anti-trafficking activities are most successful when co-produced by civilians and the police. However, community collaboration with the police on crime prevention will not work unless the necessary motivators and enabling conditions summarized in this report are in place (Figure 1), most importantly the timely and competent support from a trusted enforcement body, be it police, rangers, or military. Without this support, communities engaging in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking may put themselves at considerable risk.

Figure 1: Summary of factors that motivate local communities to engage in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts



OWNERSHIP

Communities that have rights of ownership and directly benefit from conservation and sustainable use have a strong incentive to detect and inform on poachers. This scenario is particularly apt when the benefits accrued through sustainable wildlife management meet or exceed those that could be obtained directly or indirectly through poaching or trafficking. Benefits do not always have to be monetary; increased security of access to valued natural resources and the authority to exclude non-rightsholders from using community resources are also incentives. This devolution of ownership and management authority from the state to the community also reinforces cultural identity. When communities perceive poaching to be stealing from them, they will inform on their community members and take considerable risks to inform on and even confront outsiders.

TRUST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Individuals are typically not motivated to assist the police (or other arresting authority) in crime prevention and law enforcement if they perceive the authority of the police to be illegitimate, corrupt, unaccountable, or unfair. Likewise, police are often distrustful of local communities, as they often see them as poachers with little regard for the rule of law. Evidence shows, however, that frequent and personal interactions between community members and law enforcement officers can build the necessary trust on both sides. This encourages both engagement by the community and responsiveness by the police, which in turn improves crime prevention, increases arrests of law breakers, and alleviates insecurity. Police are more likely to respond to local communities when they see them as legitimate owners of their lands and wildlife, and therefore that poaching is a breach of their property rights.

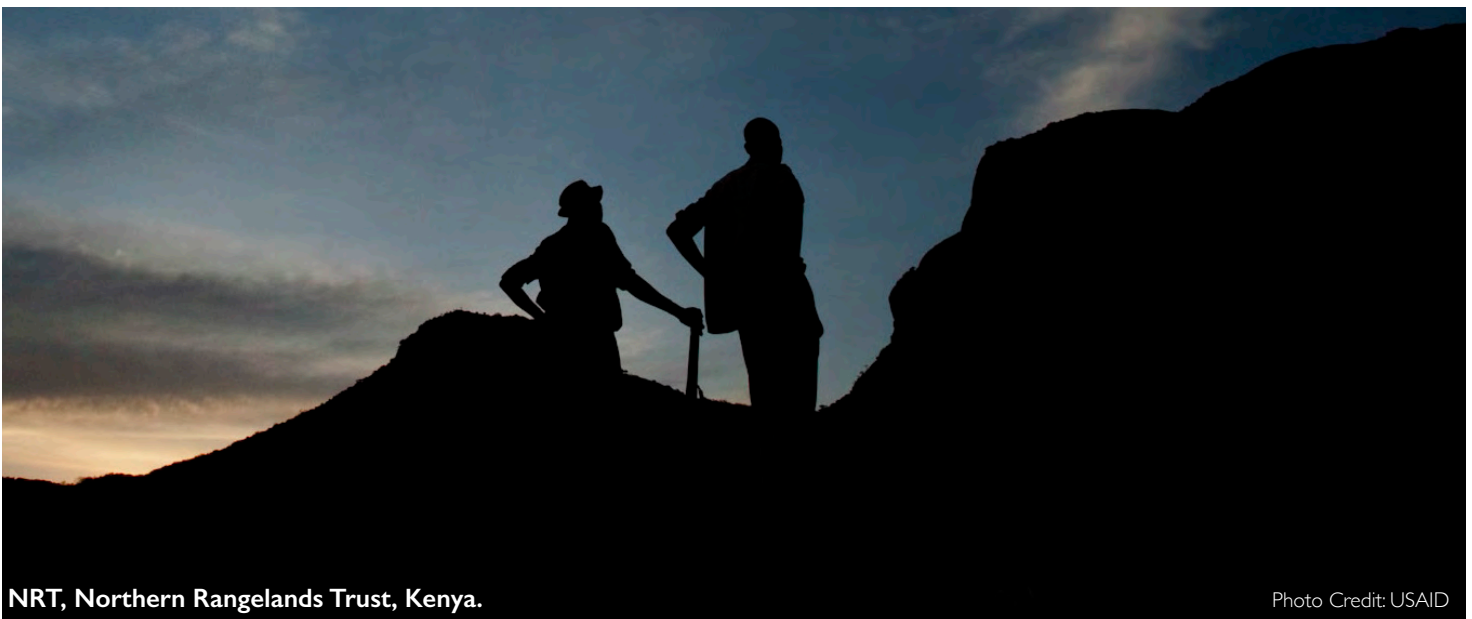
Community members are also reluctant to become active in crime prevention if they fear retaliation from criminals, who are at times members of their extended family or community. Thus the anonymity of informers is key. Individuals are more likely to cooperate with the police if they can do so through a community organization because this increases their anonymity and reduces the risks of retaliation. Individuals who do provide actionable intelligence to the police – either directly or through a community organization – often stop if the police and judiciary fail to prosecute and punish crimes effectively. They feel their efforts to engage with the police are worthless, and they fear that the release of suspected criminals will increase the risk of retaliation.

COMMUNITY COHESION

The ability of a community to mobilize and organize to prevent crime and enforce the law depends on the level of social cohesion and trust among community members. Residents with a strong sense of community (i.e., this is my neighborhood and it is important to me) are more likely to defend it from disturbance from both internal and external criminals. Coming together to promote citizen safety requires collective action; this is difficult if neighbors do not trust one another. Communities that come together and work collaboratively with the police can co-produce public safety. Evidence shows that this is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime of all types.

MINIMIZING RISKS TO COMMUNITIES

There is almost universal agreement that civilians should not confront criminals directly. Their roles should be as scouts, informants, and guides, not law enforcers. Citizens should limit their roles to reporting crime, providing information to the police, serving as witnesses, and taking preventative measures. Risks to community members are lower when poachers are from the community, have social ties with the community, and when wildlife is of low value. When communities have weak social cohesion, informants risk being shunned or even physically abused by poachers. When organized criminal gangs with no social ties to the community poach for high-value wildlife products, local informants are at much greater risk, particularly if they encounter or attempt to confront the poachers. Timely and competent support from a trusted national arresting authority is essential to minimize physical risk to community members who engage in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking activities. The risks are further diminished when the law enforcement process works well (i.e., arrested poachers are charged, put on trial, and punished when convicted). Without a trusted and competent arresting authority that is able and willing to respond rapidly when communities ask for their assistance, local informants who provide intelligence about high-value wildlife poaching remain at considerable risk.



NRT, Northern Rangelands Trust, Kenya.

Photo Credit: USAID

CASE STUDIES

Information gathered during structured interviews with conservation practitioners suggest that poaching occurs in a range of different governance contexts. Three broad scenarios were identified, along with illustrative case studies.

Scenario I: Community Rights are Formally Recognized and Wildlife is of Low Value

Case Study – Tamshiyacu Tahuayo Communal Conservation Area, Peru (2009-present): In 1991, the regional government recognized the traditional rights of local communities to manage their territory and exclude poachers. With support from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and several other institutions, local communities developed the skills and expertise needed to sustainably manage resources within their traditional territory. Community members regulate hunting of wildlife and prohibit access to their fisheries by outsiders. Wildlife surveys show that hunted species such as peccaries have stable populations in this conservation area, and the community is compliant with prohibitions on hunting threatened species, such as jaguar, tapirs, and giant river otters.

Case Study – Locally Managed Marine Areas, Madagascar (2009-present): Political turmoil in the country over the last decade dramatically decreased funding for government agency operations. In response, the national government devolved authority for fisheries management in Antongil Bay to coastal communities. The WCS worked in partnership with local communities to create Locally Managed Marine Areas and develop a seascape-scale coastal fisheries co-management plan for the Bay. Community Marine Rangers conduct regular patrols to enforce no-take zones, temporary closures, and gear restrictions. These unarmed rangers are recognized as legitimate Locally Managed Marine Area enforcement agents and are periodically supported by government agents during gear seizures. Fishers report increases in the size of fish within Locally Managed Marine Areas, the return of *Sardinella* species, and higher numbers of octopus. By early 2015, hundreds of illegal fishing nets had been confiscated by rangers and destroyed by government fisheries officers.

Scenario II: Community Rights Are Formally Recognized and Wildlife is of High Value

Case Study – Community Conservancies, Namibia (1993-present): In 1996, the government enacted legislation that allowed for the establishment of conservancies in communal areas and provided communities with the legal right to contract with trophy hunting outfitters and ecotourism operators on conservancy lands, and to benefit from the value of these enterprises in the form of fees and salaries. Beginning in 1993, USAID provided support to the World Wildlife Fund and several local partners to build capacity for community-based conservation and the management of conservancies. By 2014, there were 79 registered conservancies, representing more than 300,000 people and 10 million hectares of land. Communities play a vital role by serving as the eyes and ears for law enforcement, with timely and effective support by the police and judiciary. Since establishment of the conservancies, wildlife numbers and diversity have increased, and Namibia has largely avoided the catastrophic losses of elephants and rhinos to poaching that other African countries have experienced in recent years.

Case Study – Northern Rangeland Trust, Kenya (2005-present): Community conservancies in northern Kenya initially evolved as a response to weak rule of law, high levels of intertribal conflict, and general insecurity. In 2013, the country's Wildlife Conservation and Management Act gave legal recognition to the conservancies. They have a multifaceted community-policing approach to address wildlife crime. Community members provide intelligence, and serve as rangers who monitor wildlife.

The conservancies receive strong support from the national and county governments, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and the Northern Rangelands Trust, an umbrella organization that helps oversee them. Community conservancies now cover 2.5 million hectares in Northern Kenya and provide critical range for elephants and other wildlife. Poaching of elephants has decreased significantly within conservancies – in 2012, conservancy rangers reported 101 elephants had been poached and in 2014, this number was down to 27.

Scenario III: Community Rights Are Not Formally Recognized and the State Attempts to Halt Poaching

Case Study – Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) and Ecosystems Improved for Sustainable Fisheries (ECOFISH) Projects, Philippines (FISH: 2003-2010, ECOFISH: 2012-2017):

The 1991 Local Government Code devolved the management of coastal resources to municipalities and cities. With support from USAID, the FISH project worked with coastal communities to better manage their fisheries in a way that benefits biodiversity and local livelihoods. At the start of the project, there was poor compliance with existing fisheries regulations, and illegal fishing was common in the focal areas. The project built capacity by strengthening the ability of local governments to manage fisheries and budget appropriately; training local law enforcement units to monitor marine protected areas and fishing grounds and confront violators; and building relationships between fishers, communities, and local authorities to promote co-management of natural resources. FISH recorded a 12.8% increase in fish stocks from the 2004 baseline to 2010, when the project ended. ECOFISH is expanding this approach to more focal areas and developing tools that can be disseminated more widely.

Case Study – Goats for Hope, Indonesia (2007-present): The 1990 Indonesian Act No. 5 states that protected area management is fully handled by the government, but communities are allowed to participate in sustainable forest management and income-generating activities in bordering areas. In 2007, the Wildlife Conservation Society started to work in partnership with the government to help communities bordering the Bukit Barisan Selatan protected area. Here, the cost of living with tigers had discouraged communities from engaging in anti-poaching activities, and encouraged both retaliatory killings and support for professional tiger poachers. The Wildlife Conservation Society worked to reduce human-tiger conflicts by building tiger-proof enclosures for their livestock and generate income by providing high quality breeder goats. The Wildlife Conservation Society also helped train Wildlife Response Units that respond rapidly to community reports of human-tiger conflict and built relationships between community members and local police. Increased government engagement with local community members led to more trust, and they now serve as local informants. The project has been successful in reducing the number of livestock killed by tigers – and no tigers have been killed in human-tiger conflicts or killed by poachers in the last several years – a dramatic decline from the estimated 47 tigers that were killed in 2006 and 2007.

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Front Cover: Community meeting in Namibia. Photo Credit: Scott Felton World Wildlife Fund (WWF) North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)

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