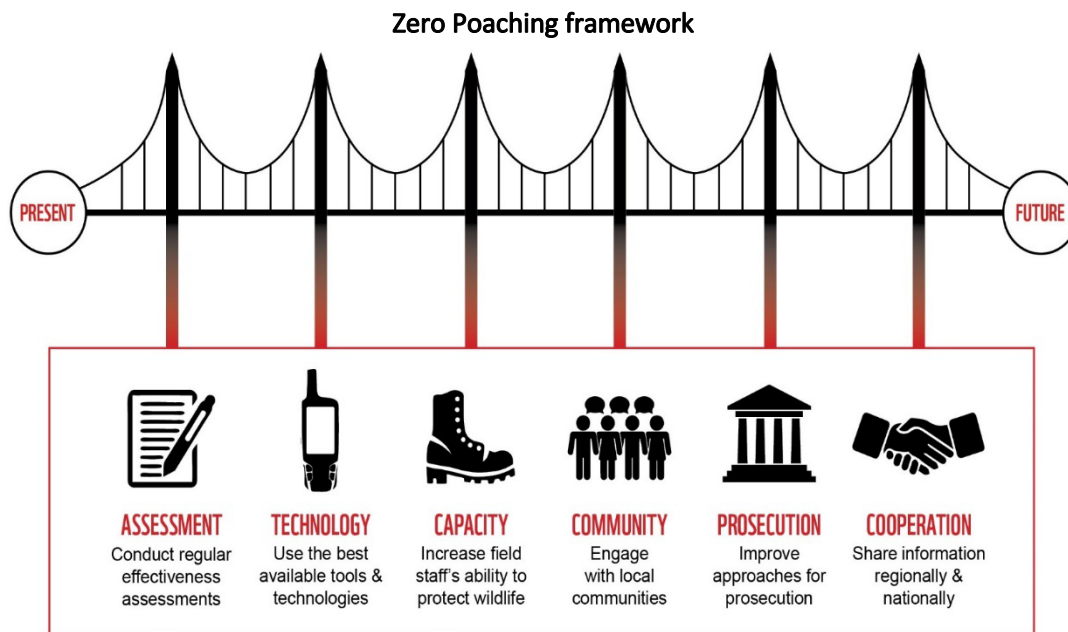


## Developing an Approach to Community-based Conservation Crime Prevention

### Background

Wildlife crime is a global phenomenon and new innovative approaches are needed to help bridge the gap between desired conservation outcomes, such as 'stop the poaching,' and the methods, theories, and practices best suited to understand and prevent illegal and harmful behavior. Under the Zero Poaching Framework it is widely acknowledged that poaching will not be prevented unless all pillars are actively and successfully implemented simultaneously. However, there are surprisingly few best practices under the community pillar.



Integration of criminology techniques along-side conservation methods is advantageous to understanding the complex context in which wildlife crime takes place and, equally importantly, the diverse sociological conditions, motivations, and opportunities that drives diverse people to become involved in wildlife crime. WWF's Wildlife Crime Initiative is using the emerging field of *conservation criminology*<sup>1</sup> to develop, evaluate and implement a community-based approach to conservation crime prevention to not only diversify our suite of responses to wildlife crime but also to move beyond detection and toward wildlife crime prevention.

Community-based conservation crime prevention draws on best practices from the criminology field and merges them with our best practices and disciplinary tools of conservation. Community-based conservation crime prevention, for example, uses theories and methods from situational crime prevention, and community-based, problem-oriented, and intelligence-led policing that have been used and evaluated in more traditional criminological settings, such as fighting urban street crime. Practitioners in conservation criminology are currently adapting a suite of tools for use in diverse

<sup>1</sup> See Gibbs, C., Gore, M., McGarrell, E.F. & Rivers III, L. (2010). Introducing conservation criminology: Toward interdisciplinary scholarship on environmental crimes and risk. *British Journal of Criminology*: 50, 124-144.

conservation contexts. These wildlife crime prevention techniques are aimed at increasing the risks, increasing the effort, increasing the incentives for compliance, reduce the rewards, reduce provocations and remove the excuses of diverse people involved in wildlife crime.

Any approach aimed at wildlife crime prevention must have a holistic strategy in order to account for the diverse typology of those involved. For example, in any given conservation area you may have one, several or all of four types of poachers: local premeditated (e.g., direct poachers), organized premeditated, opportunistic, and provoked (e.g., retaliatory-based). Each of these four types may have variety of motivations for poaching. Traditional conservation techniques such as community-based management and wildlife damage mitigation and prevention align with many strategies for situational crime prevention such as 'increase incentives for compliance' and 'reduce provocation' by 'reducing frustrations and stress' for provoked and opportunistic poachers. These and other traditional conservation approaches, such as education, extension and awareness, are valuable tools and should be evaluated and modified within the context of community-based conservation crime prevention if they are to best meet the explicit goal of wildlife crime prevention. However, additional approaches are needed to deal with premeditated wildlife crime, in particular, increasingly organized and violent poachers that enter wildlife areas and are a threat to species conservation and security in rural communities. Continuing to pursue innovations and strategies that 'increase the risks' to and 'increase the efforts' needed by these poachers will be necessary. Additionally, there is a need to explore and adapt the best practices from community-based and problem-oriented policing to improve interactions between wildlife law enforcement and the communities in which they serve.

The aim of community-based conservation crime prevention is to create readily adaptable tools from mainstream criminology to fit complex wildlife crime contexts across the globe. Community-based conservation crime prevention does not intend to replace strategies aimed at dealing with long-term fundamental drivers of wildlife crime, such as poverty and weak governance, instead community-based conservation crime prevention will work in conjunction with these efforts to attempt to achieve both more immediate and sustained wildlife crime reduction. In order to achieve these goals community-based conservation crime prevention needs to continue to pilot developed tools in a variety of contexts, validate new ideas, evaluate existing approaches, and create a streamlined community-based conservation crime prevention best-practices toolbox for local conservationist and law enforcement alike to adapt in order to fit their specific conservation situation and needs. There are no silver bullets for conservation crime prevention. We need to seek a suit of techniques that are most advantageous for dealing with diverse cultural, economic and security contexts, and can take into account the variety of motivations and drivers of the diverse people involved in wildlife crime.

### **Work to date**

Recognizing that community-based crime prevention is directed at trying to influence the underlying social and economic causes of crime, as well as offender motivation and that social norms are the strongest driver of crime acceptance by a community, WWF in partnership with researchers from Michigan State University has developed a suite of tools that aim to illicit an clear understanding of the factors that will enhance voluntary compliance with legislation and community support for crime prevention.

These tools are based on the criminology frameworks for situational crime prevention, and community-based, problem-oriented, and intelligence-led policing, and are participatory in nature. Their aim is to understand problems in terms of the various interests at stake as individuals and groups of people are affected in different ways by a problem and have different ideas about what should be done about the problem. The tools are also designed to aid rangers pro-actively try to solve problems rather than just react to the harmful consequences of problems.

WWF has tested this approach in Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park in Indonesia with positive results. This test enabled a new understanding of community perception of crime and natural resource use as well as community desires for ranger-community interactions.

### **Making the community-based conservation crime prevention a reality**

The next steps in developing a holistic toolkit for community-based conservation crime prevention is as follows:

1. Based on the testing already conducted adapt the tools and develop new approaches where required,
2. Further test the approach in other areas of the world where wildlife crime is a serious problem and where the biological, cultural and crime situations are diverse. We propose to test the approach in:
  - Sabi Game Park, Mozambique
  - Bounba Bek National Park, Cameroon
  - Bardia National Park, Nepal,
3. Finalize the community-based conservation crime prevention toolkit in partnership with researchers from Michigan State University and the Southern Africa Wildlife College,
4. Integrate the toolkit into the community-based natural resource management module of the Southern Africa Wildlife College,
5. Publish the community-based conservation crime prevention toolkit and promote its use globally.