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Oak Foundation—Disrupting criminal networks, promoting and improving existing laws and building global capacity

The dramatic growth in illegal wildlife trade as an organized, transnational crime makes it imperative to escalate the fight against illegal activities—activity that results in significant, negative, and potentially irreversible effects on decades of hard-won conservation work.

In response to this threat, Oak Foundation launched its newest initiative in 2016 with the aim of protecting vulnerable populations of wild elephants and rhinoceros from illegal wildlife trade. The aims of the portfolio are threefold: to disrupt criminal networks, to promote enforcement of existing laws and to advocate for greater wildlife protection where necessary, and to build the global capacity of the conservation sector—and beyond.

Disrupting Criminal Networks

Addressing trafficking requires integrated, intelligence-led approaches in investigations and prosecutions to understand and disrupt illegal activities across the entire value chain. To achieve this, we welcome projects that work to advance the understanding of the supplier and trader motivations in source, transit and demand countries; investigate, reveal and dismantle transnational trade routes, networks and schemes; and prosecute, convict and sentence perpetrators.

Promoting and Improving Existing Laws

We prioritize support to initiatives aimed at disrupting illegal wildlife trade networks while enhancing lasting enforcement action. To achieve this, we welcome projects that work to correct distortions in global, transnational and national law and policies that are allowing criminals to use

loopholes to launder illegal goods into legal markets; advocate for policy reforms, including establishing illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime with severe penalties and enacting domestic bans; and reform key institutions and international policy frameworks to ensure black markets do not proliferate.

Building Global Capacity

We believe the conservation sector can benefit from better data and analysis, technology, innovation and additional resources. To achieve this, we support initiatives that build global capacity through the coordination, alignment and amplification of funder strategies; integrate and align non-governmental actors to combat illegal wildlife; expand and share knowledge about supply chain and demand for illegal wildlife; and encourage political engagement in key countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

Oak Foundation's principles highlight the importance of working in partnership with actors from the public, non-profit and private sectors that have complementary roles, promoting innovative responses with technology and data, advancing responsibly shared knowledge, and adapting strategies and grant making given the fluid nature of illegal wildlife trade. In all of our support, we strive to address the root causes of the illegal wildlife trade, while protecting the rights of communities and indigenous groups who live in and around conservation areas.

We are especially honoured to work with so many of the best, brightest and most courageous conservationists who are working tirelessly to stem the threat of illegal wildlife trade and ensure a world where wild landscapes flourish.

Together, we know we can support durable disruption of wildlife crime networks and healthy enabling environments where people, wildlife and markets can thrive together.

Oak Foundation's Illegal Wildlife Trade Team