



Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund

Covid-19 Rapid Response Round - Final Report

Due within two months of the end date of the Rapid Response Round project (maximum 6 pages)

Project reference	CV19RR08
if linked with an ongoing project, please include that project reference here (e.g. iwt001)	
Project title	Strengthening enforcement and building capacity to combat Malawi's Pangolin trade
Country/ies	Malawi
Lead organisation	Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
Partner institution(s)	Department National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW); Malawi Police Services (Prosecutions) (MPS); Directorate Public Prosecutions, Malawi (DDP); Malawian Judiciary (MJ); Tikki Hywood Foundation, Zimbabwe (THF)
Start/end date of project	January to March 2021
Which fund was this project relevant to?	Darwin Initiative / Darwin Plus / Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund
Grant value (£)	£39,395.00
Project Leader name	Jonny Vaughan
Report author(s) and date	31 st May 2021

1. Project Summary

Between July and September 2020, Malawi registered 46 international wildlife Trade (IWT) cases of which 61% were cases associated with pangolins. Further, 30 arrests were registered between April-September 2020, compared to 43 in the prior two years. Evidence shows that, prior to COVID-19, there was a strong in-country market for pangolin trade, with members of a high-profile Chinese syndicate buying pangolins for consumption and then collecting scales for onwards trafficking.

Global travel restrictions and the closure of Malawi's international airport and other transit hubs hampered trafficking of contraband out of the country, making export near-impossible. Syndicate members had fewer incentives to procure pangolins, forcing sellers to seek new buyers and, in doing so, take risks that bring them to the attention of law enforcement. At the same time, economic hardship as a result of pandemic increased the supply of pangolins from source communities across the border in Mozambique, as rising poverty and ongoing land clearances push people into poaching. Hence this project to ensure that enforcement procedures are strengthened and communities with high rates of offending are sensitized on wildlife legislation to deter pangolin trafficking through;

- Building capacity for frontline professionals (including wildlife staff and investigative officers) to deliver an effective 'first response' to confiscated pangolins, which will support subsequent prosecution.
- Developing a legal tool to support successful prosecution of pangolin crime cases.
- Mapping 'offender trafficking hotspots' and deliver targeted sensitization on deterrent wildlife legislation.

The project addressed the challenges through a multidimensional three-way approach. Firstly, through the partnership with Tikki Hywood Foundation, Zimbabwe (THF), adapting key resource materials on receiving and assessing Live Pangolins which was later used during a specialist training on effective 'first response'. Secondly, the project initiated the development of legal tool which aims to provide guidance on prosecution protocols on handling of pangolins as evidence required in court pangolins to be physically brought to court as evidence. Lastly, the project implemented a targeted media campaign in 'hotspot' communities for offenders as a geo-targeted sensitisation on wildlife Legislation

as well as capacity building for journalists from across Malawi on how they can strengthen the media campaign with facts associated that would support behavioral change.

The project targeted the whole Country with its activities. The participants for the First responders in Pangolin Management were drawn from 11 districts namely Karonga, Rumphi, Mzuzu, Kasungu, Nkhatakota, Salima, Lilongwe, Nkhatakota, Blantyre, Chikwawa and Nsanje districts. Further, the radio stations that were engaged in sensitization campaigns have coverage in all the 28 districts of Malawi hence the radio messages were broadcasted in all the districts.

2. Project Achievements

Objective and Outcome One: The project strived build capacity for frontline professionals (including wildlife staff and investigative officers) to deliver an effective ‘first response’ to confiscated pangolins, which will support subsequent prosecution that would results into More pangolins surviving crime: via an improved ‘first response’. Frontline professionals will also be better equipped to capture evidence that may be later used in sentencing (which will also support the following change).

To achieve this objective and outcome one, the following activities and results were achieved

a) Adaptation of protocols for receiving and assessing live pangolins for use by first responders in Malawi

Through partner THF, an existing Protocol for Receiving and Assessing Live Pangolins adapted for use in Malawi. The protocol provides guidance for first responders so that they know the biological needs of a pangolin, steps to follow for pangolin recovery, how to handle pangolins, how to handle baby pangolins, key things to know for baby pangolins, and legal requirements required for handling pangolins. Below is an excerpt of the components of the tool. (A copy of the protocol has been attached separately).

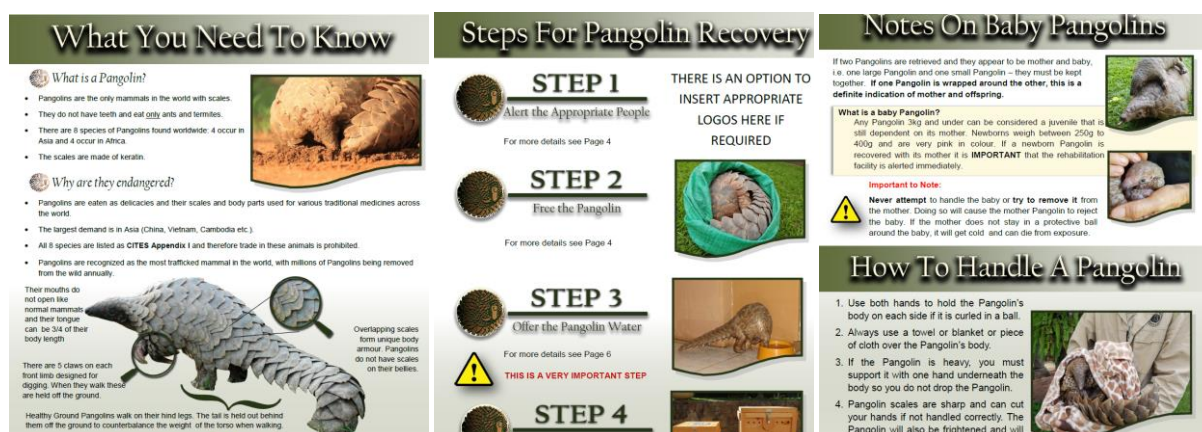


Figure 1: Some pages in the Protocol for receiving and assessing Pangolin

b) Capacity Building Training for First Responders on how manage a live recovered pangolin

A capacity building training for first responders was conducted using the Protocol for Receiving and Assessing Live Pangolins. Participants were drawn from different areas across Malawi including Reserves including Mzuzu natural Sanctuary, Mwabvi game reserve, Michiru reserve, Lengwe National Park, Nyika National Park, Lake Malawi National Park, and Vwaza reserve. Boarder post officers from Mwanza, Dedza and Songwe boarders; Chileka airport and Kamuzu International airport were also included in the training.

Key topics during the training included: pangolin



Figure 2: Participants actively listening to presentations that were done by one of the experts from LWT, Dr Amanda Salb

behaviour, diet, home ranges, reproduction in the context of IWT, what to do when a pangolin is rescued and received from the IWT and how to support a pangolin in the first 24 hours, components of the first responders kit and how to use the kit, basics in pangolin assessment, scoring system, rehabilitation needs and release site. In addition, participants learnt more on wildlife crimes and its impact to people, the economy and the environment. They were also introduced to wildlife investigation requirements as well as the International provisions for wildlife protection using the updated CITES. Through a training evaluation, it was established that 80% of the first responders had acquired substantial knowledge on how they could handle pangolins to support its survival. Further, 78% of the first responders appreciated new knowledge acquired on the behaviour of pangolins and described it as essential in enabling them to competently handle any pangolin that would be released in the reserve areas which they come from. Lastly, the responders recognised the need for more of similar trainings to reinforce the knowledge gain as well as trickling down of the training to other responders from reserve areas across the country. Below are pictures of the training whilst in session. A total of 32 first responders were trained (24 males and 8 females).

Objective and Outcome Two: Aimed at developing a legal tool to support successful prosecution of pangolin crime cases to strengthen the prosecution processes associated with live-pangolins for more efficient process which: allows the use of affidavits and court visits to prevent the pangolin from being physically brought to court as physical evidence; Support prosecutors to submit requests for the courts to consider expert recommendations on veterinary requirements prior to the release of a pangolin back into the wild; and support prosecutors to present expert recommendations on release locations. To achieve this objective and outcomes the project developed a draft legal tool to guide prosecutors and magistrates on technical facts and considerations related to the welfare of pangolins as well as an AIDE MEMOIRE for the collection of evidence in wildlife crime. The project completed the development of an AIDE MEMOIRE (Attached separately). The tool highlights the key provisions for the protection of animals in the law of Malawi, guidance on how to deploy first responders /rescue teams, scene management, animal management and suspect management. However, due to the limited timeframe for the project coupled with limited opportunity for the implementation of meetings and workshops due to the pandemic, the process of developing the legal tool was only initiated within the project with the prospects of finalizing the legal tool outside the project timeframe using funds from other projects. The tool is necessary for preparation and review of court submissions for the purpose of convincing the court to release the live pangolins within the shortest period of time possible as well as convince the court why it is very difficult and harmful to bring live pangolin as an exhibit evidence in court. The draft tool comprises information on the following key areas: Understanding Pangolins and their sensitivity in relation to its dietary needs and health issues; available Malawi Laws protecting pangolins; Guidance on release or disposal of Animals that are Exhibits; guidelines and best practices in handling pangolin cases. The legal tool is expected to be finalized by end of July 2021 and the draft has been attached separately)

Objective and Outcome Three: Mapping ‘offender trafficking hotspots’ and deliver targeted sensitization on deterrent wildlife legislation to achieve reduced opportunities for pangolin crime: via increased awareness of penalties for engaging in wildlife crime, and increased gathering of intelligence and disruption of criminal activity as a result of a rise in reporting in high offending communities. The project conducted the following activities to achieve the objective.

Pangolin briefing paper

A brief paper for pangolin was designed to provide summary of the illegal wildlife trade of pangolins in Malawi. The paper was disseminated to 25 journalists. The main goal of this paper was for media and stakeholders so that they can transfer information. The paper can be downloaded from the following link: <https://www.lilongwewildlife.org/reports/>



Figure 3: Copies of the briefing paper

Pangolin video Public Service Announcement (PSA)

A Pangolin video PSA was also developed that shared the same information as the briefing report in video format. The video is available in English, Chichewa and Mandarin versions¹. To date, there are 101 views on YouTube, 5 retweets and 6 likes on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/malawiwildlife/status/1363028157696274432?s=1006>)

The video can be viewed on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H44PpiJYqfE>

¹ Mandarin version of the PSA was created with the target audience being the Chinese national residing in Malawi. This version will be used by the government of Malawi in their talks with the Chinese Embassy of Malawi.

From the Pangolin video PSA, a radio PSA was developed with the same messages. Radio stations from identified pangolin IWT hotspots were procured to air the one-minute radio adverts on their stations during their prime time and normal time slots. Each of the radio stations played a minimum of 60 adverts. The radio stations are: Zodiac Broadcasting Station, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Chanco radio, Dzimwe radio, Radio Maria, Galaxy FM, Yoneco FM, Power 101, Radio Islam and VoL radio station.

Commemoration of World Pangolin Day

The project initiated, facilitated and participated in the first ever commemoration of the World Pangolin Day which fall on 20th February every year. Ahead of the commemoration day, zoom press briefing was held on Tuesday 16th February



Figure 4: A snippet of the zoom platform during the press briefing

to increase awareness on the importance of pangolin and related issues, as well as generate coverage and interest on pangolin. In addition, the briefing paper and pangolin PSA were presented during the meeting along with question and answers session. Some of the questions from journalists and participants included Why should Malawians really worry about the trafficking of this rare, elusive creature most people may never see in a lifetime? What value does it add to our ecosystem? Is there deliberate effort to talk to Chinese nationals living in Malawi against the malpractice? As SADC is talking about regional integration or tackling common challenges as a united bloc, how is Malawi engaging its fellow

SADC member states to confront pangolin trafficking? The briefing was attended by the Director of Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, Blackmore Agency and eight media houses (both print and electronic), and the following media coverage (links) was achieved. In addition, other adverts were also paid for to be published on the actual day (20th February). In addition, broadcasts were made from the press briefing. More details in the annex.

- <https://www.mwnation.com/pangolin-trafficking-on-the-rise/>
- <https://malawi24.com/2021/02/18/malawians-urged-to-protect-pangolins/>
- <https://www.yonecofm.com/index.php/2021/02/19/wildlife-dept-calls-for-protection-of-pangolins/>

The briefing and other adverts was co-financed by USAID, USFWS and mHub

Media training workshop on Pangolin Welfare

In partnership with Department of National Parks and Wildlife and Association of Environmental Journalists², a media training workshop for Pangolin Welfare was conducted to provide expert knowledge of pangolin and their illegal trade to media personnel that cover conservational stories. The meeting covered all angles of the pangolin, including details of the various species to how the trade grew internationally and nationally. The meeting then opened the floor to questions which attracted participant’s interest in the various aspects of pangolins including what challenges Malawi is facing in protecting pangolins, the vet process they have to go through after being rescued and the survival rate of



Figure 5: participants in the conference room (L), and a group photo (R)

pangolins in captivity. The meeting then ended with a presentation by nationally renowned journalist [Mzati Nkolokosa](#) on how to write wildlife stories that inspire change. Training was held on 26th March 2021 and 25 media practitioners (20 males and 4 females) were in attendance. Apart from 24 members of Association of Environmental journalists from 19 media houses, present were officers from Department of National Parks and Wildlife and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust.

Following the workshop, Journalist initiated sensitisation campaign through different channels. Below are links some to some of the key media coverages followed by print media extracts is presented in Annex 4.

- <http://www.aejmalawi.org/news/?scribes-urged-to-salvage-pangolin-from-extinction-3d1528fa410d962cc6828a29574bc53f>
- https://web.facebook.com/MibawaStudios/videos/810100152928654/?_rdc=1&_rdr
- <https://www.maravipost.com/why-the-need-to-salvage-pangolin-species-from-extinction-in-malawi/>
- https://web.facebook.com/MibawaStudios/videos/539817504034211/?_rdc=1&_rdr
- <https://times.mw/protecting-pangolins-in-danger/>

The media engagement, resulted into publishing of 21 articles disseminated through various media platforms, and six paid up articles. These articles were electronic and print articles.

3. Problems encountered and how they were overcome.

The major challenge was the COVID-19. The kick-off the project coincided with the hit of the second wave in early January 2021, which lead government of Malawi and institutions developing and implementing policies that restricted movements and formal gatherings to contain the spread of COVID-19. Nevertheless, LWT employed innovative approach to achieve the objective of the project. Some of the approached included engaging consultants who worked with remote support from key stakeholders and LWT staff to develop key documents. Furthermore, briefing session for journalists was held online whilst other training activities were placed on hold until the pandemic environment had improved. Lastly, the project only implemented radio adverts instead of diversifying with other planned channels such as community engagement meetings, cinema, and roadshow. The pandemic situation improved towards end of March and some meetings that required physical meetings were conducted.

The project made efforts to ensure gender equality was fostered during implementation of all activities by ensuring that a deliberate effort was made to ensure that invited organisations consider sending proportional numbers of males and females to planned activities. Furthermore, the project ensured value for money was achieved in all activities by ensuring that the implemented activities are sustainable with potential for a trickle-down effect. For example, the capacity building done for first responders and journalists instilled long term knowledge and skills that is likely going to be replicated in their work life for a long time to come. Furthermore, the participants of the capacity building trainings made commitments to orient their colleagues when they return to their duty stations so that they all acquire the skills and are able to support one another whenever there is need to handle a live rescued pangolin.

4. Project Achievements

The project achieved most of the set outcomes as described in the table below

Outcome Indicator	Achievement
Objective 1: Build capacity for frontline professionals (including wildlife staff and investigative officers) to deliver an effective 'first response' to confiscated pangolins, which will support subsequent prosecution efforts	
100% of identified 'first responders' have participated in expert training on pangolin rescue, rehabilitation and release needs (by 31 March 2021).	A total of 32 first responders were identified and trained in pangolin rescue, rehabilitation and release needs. This represents 100% achievement. Due to accelerated COVID-19 infections, the training was conducted in April 2021, during a period when the infections had reduced.
95% of pangolins assessed as being in categories 1 and 2 (i.e. requiring limited care) are released into protected areas within two weeks of being confiscated (by 31 March 2021).	4 pangolins underwent rehabilitation during the project phase. One Pangolin died and 3 pangolins were released into protected areas (2 into Kasungu National Park and 1 into Liwonde National Park) representing 75%. See Annex 1

Outcome Indicator	Achievement
100% of trainees are collecting post-intake data on key pangolin welfare indicators (by 31 March 2021).	The 32 First responders are collecting data on key welfare indicators for pangolins. This represents 100% achievement.
Objective 2: Strengthen judicial processes to support prosecution of pangolin cases	
Legal tool developed and disseminated to DPP and MPS (by 31 March 2021).	The legal tool was drafted and undergoing finalisation processes. It will be finalised by end of July 2021
Legal tool used by prosecutors in 80% of pangolin cases monitored by LWT's WJP (by end of 2021).	Legal tool not yet finalised, and once finalized it will be used together with other existing tools to prosecute related cases
Objective 3: Increase sensitisation on deterrent legislation in 'hotspot' offending communities	
30% increase in number of calls to LWT-run Wildlife Emergency Hotline from target communities (by end June 2021).	The DNPW hotline number was promoted with the video PSA and the audio PSA advertised on all radio shows and newspaper interviews. There has not been any observable change in the number of calls received due to the limited time that has lapsed since the sensitisation was conducted (March 2021). DNPW continues to monitor the line, and the change may be noted by June 2021
50 decision makers and influencers attend community engagement meetings in target communities (by 31 March 2021).	Due to the stricter COVID-19 restrictions were implemented in January, meetings in communities could not take place. This was substituted with intense media activity that would reach the target communities. Using popular media houses in the hotspot areas, radio Ads were aired and interviews with influential people such as the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, Park Manager for Michiru Wildlife Reserve and the Chairperson of Association of Environmental Journalists. These interviews were also held with popular journalists of those media houses that have a good following.
M&E 'knowledge, attitudes and practice' survey show that beneficiaries have increased their IWT knowledge by 60% compared to the baseline survey at start of project and are supportive of project impact (by 31 March 2021).	Due to the stricter COVID-19 restrictions and the limited timeframe of the grant, a KAP survey could not take place.

5. Lessons learnt

- The training for first responders was the first of its kind hence it received very positive rating from the participants. It was observed that most first responders were handling pangolins without any technical expertise which also risked the lives of the rescued animals. The training provided the much-needed knowledge and skills for the first responders to use whenever they are required to handle live pangolins. There is need to consider scaling up and conduct refresher trainings so that most first responders are reached with first hand training, and regular refresher trainings
- The video and radio PSA, and briefing paper are good resource materials in transfer in the messages to the general public including media, who has used them for developing other media related materials (21 articles)
- Extensive media engagement, with provision of comprehensive information is key in creating awareness, as seen through a number of articles they developed from the interactions.

6. Other comments and feedback

- The project was timely considering that the scale of Pangolin illegal trade was quickly growing, and also being a specific grant on Pangolin made it unique, which attracted more interest from partners and the public. Therefore, any chance to scale up the project would be ideal to sustain and scale up the gains achieved in the current project.