Conserving Natural Capital and Enhancing Collaborative Management of Transboundary Resources in East Africa (CONNECT) is a four year (2019-2023) USAID-funded project led by IUCN Eastern and Southern Regional Office (ESARO) in partnership with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and TRAFFIC.

The aim of this project is to use existing conservation initiatives, information, methodologies and best practices to inject new innovative thinking to strengthen wildlife conservation action and policy at regional level for the benefit of the East African Community (EAC) Partner States.

**Project Objectives**

- Enhance collaborative management of transboundary natural resources
- Increase awareness of the economic and intrinsic value of living wildlife
- Reduce poaching and illegal trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products.
To reduce poaching and trafficking, targeted interventions have been designed to strengthen responses to the wildlife poaching and trafficking challenges in the EAC region. Special focus is given to activities that support specific Strategic Objectives of the EAC’s Strategy to Combat Poaching, Illegal Trade and Trafficking of Wildlife and Wildlife Products. These include:

1. **Patterns of use of threatened wildlife in East Africa study**
   This activity feeds into Strategic Objective 5 of the EAC anti-poaching strategy ‘Promote research and development in the fight against wildlife crime’ that identifies the lack of scientific information on illegal wildlife trade as a key limit to understanding related factors and drivers, and to designing appropriate interventions. It also contributes to strategic objective no. 6 “Promote education and public awareness about wildlife crime” of the EAC’s anti-poaching strategy building up on the phase 1 of this activity, a targeted follow up on phase 1 findings including further investigation, validation of the strategic plan for next steps and developing effective approaches for working with private sector and civil society. A targeted awareness raising and demand reduction campaign on wildlife consumption in local and East African-based East Asian Communities will also be undertaken under this activity.

2. **Role of women and youth in combating illegal wildlife trade**
   This activity will address Strategic Objective 6 of the EAC anti-poaching strategy, which identifies the “appreciation and understanding of conservation issues including benefits and challenges” as a key starting point for effective stakeholder engagement. This activity is designed to help ensure that governments better recognise the role that youth and women can play in addressing wildlife crime and will provide a voice to women and youth to share experiences with wildlife authorities and other relevant stakeholders. This activity will also generate case studies intended to provide a clear evidence base for wildlife authorities and decision makers on the value of engaging with youth and women to reduce wildlife crime among others.
3. Building capacity for stronger engagement of local communities in combating Illegal wildlife trade

This activity will contribute to Strategic Objective 4 of the EAC anti-poaching strategy “to increase capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods.” It will also contribute to Strategic Objective 2 of the strategy “to develop and enhance law enforcement capacity.” This will be achieved through a series of capacity building activities to support implementers and designers of anti-poaching projects to strengthen local community engagement in combatting illegal wildlife trade, building on the Local Communities: First Line of Defence against Illegal Wildlife Trade (FLoD) initiative (www.iucn.org/flod).

4. Development of an East-African TWIX (Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange)

This activity supports Strategic Objectives 2 “Develop and enhance law enforcement capacity”, and 3 “Strengthen regional and international collaboration” of the EAC anti-poaching strategy. TWIXs is an online tool developed to inform and strengthen wildlife enforcement actions by facilitating the exchange of information and co-operation among mandated government personnel within a particular region. This tool will be introduced in East Africa Community partner states. Trainings of enforcement officers and relevant government personnel on TWIX will also be done and an advisory group for TWIX will be established in EAC Secretariat among other specific tasks.

5. Establishing a Prosecutors’ Forum on Wildlife and Related Crimes (in KE, UG, and TZ)

This activity supports Strategic Objectives 1 “Strengthen policy and legislative frameworks to improve their effectiveness”, 2 “Develop and enhance law enforcement capacity”, and 3 “Strengthen regional and international collaboration” of the EAC anti-poaching strategy.

This forum will provide a regional platform for prosecutors and investigators to promote cooperation on transnational wildlife crimes, data sharing, bilateral agreements, mutual legal assistance, updates and harmonization of relevant laws, procedures and penalties. It will also be used to strengthen prosecutorial capacities on a variety of themes related to wildlife and organised crimes and will link with EAC TWIX.

6. Enhancing existing initiatives combatting wildlife crime at ports

This activity supports Strategic Objectives 3 “Strengthen regional and international collaboration” and 5: Promote research and development in the fight against wildlife crime” of the EAC anti-poaching strategy. The activity will enhance the overall understanding of how governance lapses at seaports could facilitate illegal wildlife trade and will mobilise political and institutional support to address it. A data-driven analysis of typologies of seizures related to wildlife crime as they affect ports and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to verify findings and assess overall strength of evidence collected is amongst the key components of this activity.

7. Increase political support for wildlife and natural ecosystems

This activity is designed to contribute to Strategic Objectives 5 and 6 of the EAC Anti-poaching Strategy, which recognizes the importance of raising awareness of the value of wildlife and wildlife habitats. The aim of this activity is to increase the political support for wildlife conservation by drawing attention to the value of wildlife in the East African community. To meet this objective the project will conduct a series of activities aimed at increasing the understanding of the value of wildlife to EAC Partner States.