womENACTion INITIATIVE

Webinar on “gender perspective in the use of criminal intelligence analysis to tackle wildlife crimes in Africa”, 27 April 2023

Project ENACT aims at mitigating the impact of transnational organized crime in Africa on development, governance, security and the rule of law. As part of the project, INTERPOL's role is to assist police agencies in Africa to adopt proactive strategies to combat organized crime, improve investigations and exchange information.

While delivering its activities, ENACT-INTERPOL team acknowledged an imbalance of female representation in the field of criminal intelligence analysis. In an effort to address this imbalance, Project ENACT launched in 2022 the womENACTion initiative. The initiative provides a safe virtual networking environment dedicated to African female law enforcement officers working in the fields of Transnational Organized Crime and Criminal Intelligence Analysis. Its purpose is to facilitate the sharing of experiences, tools and learning resources that can contribute to their career development in these fields. The womENACTion networks already gathers more than 160 female officers from 34 African countries. This one is the 3rd womENACTion webinar.

On 27th April, Project ENACT organized a webinar to focus on “Gender perspective in the use of criminal intelligence analysis to tackle wildlife crimes in Africa”. More than 100 officers from 17 African countries attended the webinar. Experts from INTERPOL specialized unit in environmental crimes, the Heads of the analytical units opened within project ENACT and female ranger units from Kenya (Team Lioness) and South Africa (Black Mamba) shared their knowledge on trends and challenges on wildlife crime in the region and discussed on the importance of applying a gender perspective in the use of analysis to prevent and curb wildlife crimes.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Cyril Gout, Director, Operational Support and Analysis, INTERPOL highlighted that INTERPOL encourages diversity, gender and inclusion which are fundamental values. He further mentioned that ENACT project is supporting countries to fight TOC and make the world safer. He then concluded his opening remarks saying that we don’t act alone or work with an isolated group of officers, we have to work with colleagues who are directly anchored in their police services whether male or female officers who will transmit their knowledge and make significant contribution combat crime.

In her introduction to gender perspective in the use of analysis in wildlife crimes, Ms. Anabella Corridoni, ENACT Analytical Coordinator, INTERPOL noted that International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), identified in 2022 that ‘the costs and benefits of wildlife and forest crime are different for men and women, and they can be impacted differently by efforts to tackle and prevent these crimes’. Moreover, she noted that, it is important to apply a gender perspective into intelligence analysis to tackle wildlife crimes since it can help to understand social relations and social networks, dynamics of violence and criminality and eventually allow law enforcement agencies to potentially detect overlooked signs of security threats.
Ms. Jacqueline Bubi, Senior Criminal Analyst, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) introduced “Team Lioness” an all-female ranger unit drawn from the Maasai community in Kenya. She acknowledged that they are in the first line of defense against poaching and retaliatory killing of wildlife in the community lands surrounding Amboseli National park. The team is better at intelligence hence combating wildlife crime along the border.

She also indicated that IFAW has rolled out a similar initiative as Team Lioness within the Maasai Mara-Serengeti conservancy. The team has a total of 8 female rangers including other parks such as the Tsavo conservation area.

Mr. Craig Spencer, Founder and Sergeant Cute Mhlongo, Black Mamba Wildlife Rangers presented an all women wildlife security team based in The Greater Kruger National Park, South Africa. The team is at the frontline and work by gathering and analyzing information, conducting patrols, searching and destroying snares as well as providing rapid response to the insurgents. He recognized the values that the women bring into the eco-system and concluded that its “imperative to recruit women for the talents and skills they bring to the conservation arena”.

In his presentation, Mr. Andrew Kachere, Head of Analytical unit, Malawi (unit opened within project ENACT) highlighted the importance of Criminal Intelligence Analysis vis-à-vis Wildlife Crimes. The unit has produced 2 analytical reports on wildlife crimes which identified the potential criminal syndicates within the wildlife criminal networks operating in the country. In his conclusion, he noted that analysis provides better understanding of organized crime dynamics and it’s a useful tool for law enforcement.

In her presentation, Ms. Jayeeta Kar, Criminal Intelligence Analyst, Environmental Security Unit, INTERPOL provided an overview of wildlife trafficking in Africa. Notably, major seizures and trafficking from Africa such as ivory, pangolins scales, lion parts, cheetahs and other primates and reptiles. She furthermore, noted that multiple challenges exist and how INTERPOL can assist member countries.

During the Q&A session, participants demonstrated interest on the various webinar’s presentations and discussions. The Black Mamba and Team lioness initiatives offered women working in law enforcement agencies different continental perspectives and success stories. Several participants were interested on understanding how a gender approach in analysis and wildlife crime could be replicated in their countries. They manifested that learning on the role of women on tackling wildlife crimes was empowering and contributed to enhance their sense of legitimacy.

Lastly, the womENACTion initiative set up 2 forums in 2022 where female officers exchange and share experience. A monthly quiz related to organized crime or criminal intelligence analysis is organized on these forums. In order to test transfer of knowledge, we used the information shared during this webinar for the May quiz.

Another webinar will take place in semester 2.