

# ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

## 2021 MID-YEAR REPORT



Elephant  
Crisis  
Fund









# Overview

**As the COVID-19 crisis continues, much of Africa remains in some level of lock-down and under travel restrictions, despite the relatively low level of infection in most countries. However, ECF partners are continuing their work, and there is no sign of COVID-19 leading to an increase in elephant poaching and ivory trafficking—although a five ton ivory seizure in Nigeria in January 2021 was cause for concern.**

Some loosening of travel restrictions has **allowed stalled activities to resume**. Technicians have finally gained access to Nouabalé Ndoki in northern Congo to set up a new radio system, for example, and an ultralight aircraft was flown into Zakouma in Chad.

As elephant poaching declines, **a new crisis of human-elephant conflict is developing**. In many places this presents a grave threat to the survival of elephants. For example, in Samburu in northern Kenya, the home of Save the Elephants, nearly half as many elephants were shot by herders (without the ivory being taken), as were killed at the height of the poaching outbreak. To address this growing threat, the ECF continues to expand its grantmaking to include human-elephant coexistence projects across the continent.

## Forest elephants

**Forest elephants are often overlooked and need more attention. Shy and elusive creatures, you're more likely to hear or smell them than to see them—even if they're only a few yards away—and they live in remote and difficult parts of Africa seldom visited by tourists.**

### SHY AND ELUSIVE CREATURES, YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO HEAR OR SMELL THEM THAN TO SEE THEM

A change in their status now helps them stand out: forest elephants are now officially recognized as a **separate species from savanna elephants**, and are now categorized as 'critically endangered' in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. The spotlight is now on the fact that they have been more impacted by the recent ivory crisis than savanna elephants. Many of the countries in which they live suffer from weak government and civil disorder, lack of conservation capacity, and uncontrolled development.

The Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF) has supported forest elephants from its inception, and in recent years, as poaching has been brought more under control in eastern and southern Africa, we have allocated more funding to protect them. **This report particularly focuses on the help that ECF partners are giving to forest elephants.**

People who safeguard forest elephants work in some of **the most dangerous parts of Africa**. After the murder of two rangers in Okapi Game Reserve last year, we were appalled to hear of the killing of long-term ECF partner Rory Young, the founder of Chengeta Wildlife in Burkina Faso. We previously supported his work in Mali and recently gave a new grant for Chengeta's ranger mentoring work in the Central African Republic. You can read about Rory's impressive conservation work on page 11 of this report.



## About forest elephants

Although forest and savanna elephants are now treated as separate species, **don't be confused by the names!** While forest elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) favor dense forest, there are forest elephants living in savanna, and savanna elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) living in forests.

Forest elephants differ from savanna elephants in a number of ways, including:

- Smaller body size.
- Smaller and more rounded ears.
- Straighter and thinner tusks that usually point downwards.
- Found in Central and West Africa, whereas savanna elephants are found in East and southern Africa (although there is some range overlap).
- Generally smaller group sizes.
- Different diet—forest elephants eat more fruit.

### AS WITH SAVANNA ELEPHANTS, FOREST ELEPHANTS PLAY INTEGRAL ROLES WITHIN THEIR ECOSYSTEM

As with savanna elephants, forest elephants play integral roles within their ecosystem. As bulk processors of plant material, they break down large amounts of vegetation and release the nutrients. They are responsible for the seed dispersal of many tree species. They create and maintain forest clearings ('bais'), with mineral-rich soil and water on which many other species depend. Some research has suggested that forest elephants **may help with carbon sequestration**.

Of the remaining African elephants left on the planet, only around 20% are forest elephants. They are in deep trouble: threatened by habitat loss and degradation, human-elephant conflict, and poaching for ivory. Even when successfully protected, forest elephants have a slow reproductive rate and **need sustained protection over time** to allow population recovery. Climate change is also likely to become an increasing issue over coming years and decades.



Forest elephant above (© Lee White/Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, Gabon) and savanna elephant below (© Jane Wynyard). Forest elephants are generally smaller, with smaller, more rounded ears, and their tusks tend to be straighter and point downwards.



# THE ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

Save the Elephants and the Wildlife Conservation Network created the Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF) to tackle the killing of elephants, the trafficking and the demand for ivory. The crisis is driven by the international ivory trade, which thrives on insecurity, organized crime, corruption, greed, and poverty. While there are signs of hope, with poaching seemingly in decline, the ivory trade continues and the ECF remains committed to ending it. As other threats to elephants' survival are coming to the fore, the ECF is expanding its scope to address them.

## AS OTHER THREATS TO ELEPHANTS' SURVIVAL ARE COMING TO THE FORE, THE ECF IS EXPANDING ITS SCOPE TO ADDRESS THEM

The ECF works with a coalition of individuals, scientists, conservation organizations, and governments to:

- End the ivory crisis - supporting anti-poaching, anti-trafficking, and demand reduction.
- Promote human-elephant coexistence - dealing with the threats to elephants in close proximity to people.
- Protect elephant landscapes - protecting elephant habitat to give them space to survive and recover.

The ECF uniquely supports the best initiatives in need of funds. Selected organizations able to make the most impact—whether they are tiny local organizations or large multinational NGOs—get our support. A team of experts ensures strategic and cost-effective allocation of the funds generously provided by donors.

The ECF is able to respond quickly and with minimal bureaucracy, deploying funds in as little as 24 hours when necessary. Uniquely, 100% of funds are used to support on-the-ground programs that save elephants. Not a single cent goes to administrative fees or overhead.

In eight years, the ECF has deployed \$27.4 million to some of the best efforts to safeguard the future for elephants, and is aiming to disburse a total of \$50 million by 2023. The ECF is working to ensure that elephant populations across Africa are no longer under threat.

## Total funding to-date

**345**

**Grants**  
issued by  
the ECF

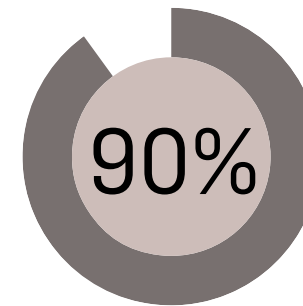
**94**

**Partners**  
have received grants  
from the ECF

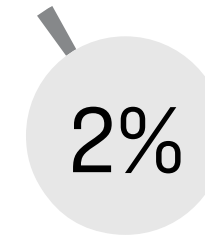
**42**

**Countries**  
with ECF investments

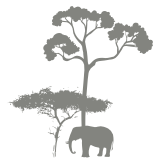
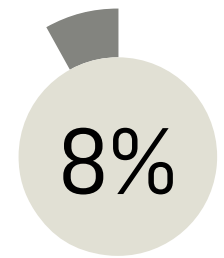
## % of funding allocated to



**ivory crisis**



**human-elephant  
coexistence**



**elephant  
landscapes**

**\$27.4 million**

**granted to ECF partners  
since 2013**

**\$1.4 million**

**granted Jan to July 2021**

**From January to July 2021, the ECF  
issued 25 grants to 18 partners in 16 countries**



# Saving Forest Elephants

## Multi-faceted and innovative approaches to protection

Protecting forest elephants is much more difficult than looking after their savanna cousins. **Physical conditions in rainforests are tough for the rangers.** There are few roads, so foot patrols last a week or more, often in waist-deep water, with biting insects, poor communications, limited supplies, the risk of encountering armed poachers, and little chance of a swift evacuation for an injured or sick ranger. Aerial support is harder, as airstrips are difficult to make and air crews struggle to see through the canopy. Since protected areas are often surrounded by timber concessions, there are seldom clear boundaries, and poachers can slip into protected areas without being detected.

### PROTECTING FOREST ELEPHANTS IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN LOOKING AFTER THEIR SAVANNA COUSINS



African Parks rangers in Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the Republic of Congo can spend weeks on patrol in challenging conditions. © Frank af Petersens.

**The last substantial refuges for forest elephants** national parks such as Nouabalé Ndoki and Odzala-Kokoua in the Republic of Congo. In other key areas, such as Chinko Conservation Area in the Central African Republic and Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo, elephant numbers have been greatly reduced from poaching and the habitat is still intact, giving a chance for recovery so long as the areas are secured for conservation.



Boats purchased with ECF funding allow African Parks rangers in Chinko Reserve, Central African Republic, to access previously unreachable areas of this vast wildlife area. © Ed Ghau.

In the past, elephant protection efforts involved sending groups of rangers into the forests on extended patrols, in the hope that this would deter poachers. Generally, this had little effect, since **the chance of encountering poachers in the dense forest was slim.** Park managers realized that a new approach was needed. This involves understanding the elephants' distribution and movements from radio-collaring and surveys, using intelligence to direct patrols, training rangers, setting up rapid reaction units, improving communications and transport, and establishing strategically located outposts close to poaching hot-spots. The ECF has supported the implementation of different combinations of these activities according to need in each site.

### THE ECF HAS SUPPORTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS OF ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO NEED IN EACH SITE





One of the many rivers intersecting Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the Republic of Congo, which allow access to both poachers and anti-poaching patrols. © Frank af Petersens.

Odzala-Kokoua National Park, managed by African Parks, is one of the largest protected areas in the Congo Basin rainforest. We have supported the development of new outposts, and access to the key rivers that allow rangers to get deep inside the forest. In partnership with Vulcan Inc., we funded the deployment of satellite collars on elephants to track their movements. It had been thought that forest elephants move much less than their savanna cousins, but **the Odzala-Kokoua elephants undertook some quite surprising treks.**

Several of the collared elephants left the park, crossed a new tarmac road, and settled in the forestry concessions far to the east. Logged forests are quite attractive to elephants (and gorillas) because of the regrowth of secondary vegetation which provides food close to the ground rather than out of reach in the canopy. These elephants still return on an annual basis to the ‘bais’ in the middle of the park. Another elephant headed off to the west and visited the neighboring country of Gabon. The information from these collared elephants has allowed African Parks to **deploy its rangers in a more efficient way** to protect the elephant population.



A vet fits a collar during a collaring operation in Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the Republic of Congo. © Chris Thouless.

After last year’s conviction of notorious elephant poacher ‘Guyvano’—who had killed an estimated 500 elephants in his career—the Wildlife Conservation Society had **another success in the criminal courts of the Republic of Congo.** Thanks to coordinated efforts of Congolese law enforcement authorities, Guyvano’s notorious mentor ‘Mondjole’ was arrested, tried and convicted for elephant poaching, along with two other members of his criminal network. He is expected to serve his full sentence, a true indicator of the judicial system’s resolve to treat this crime seriously amidst COVID-19 related constraints.

With hardened professional elephant poachers, imprisonment may be the only answer, but many people are driven to poaching out of desperation. Offering them an escape from this way of life is a much better approach when possible. Over the last two years, with ECF support, the Frankfurt Zoological Society in Lomami National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo has encouraged elephant poachers to surrender to the authorities without fear of retribution, and given them the **opportunity to start a new life.**

During 2019 and 2020, four separate groups of elephant poachers surrendered. They turned in their weapons and **renounced their illegal activities** at a special ceremony; some returned to local villages while others were retrained as rangers. In February 2021, with news circulating in the forest about the success of the rehabilitation program, Asani Kongolo and two others from his band turned in their weapons at a patrol post. To show the seriousness of their intentions, the three ex-poachers joined surveillance teams on a dugout patrol. The remaining four other poachers from the gang also want to re-enter society.



Ex-poachers in Lomami National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo celebrate the start of their new lives. After turning in their weapons and renouncing poaching, they are being helped to reintegrate into society. © Robert Abani/Frankfurt Zoological Society.

**Forest elephants in West Africa are in an even more precarious state** than in Central Africa. There are no large blocks of forest remaining, and what is left is being rapidly converted to cocoa and oil palm plantations. The main strongholds are a few protected areas, two relatively large forest blocks in Liberia, and the cross-border W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) complex, where forest elephants are living in open woodland. Other than these areas, there are scattered handfuls of elephants spread across twelve countries, mostly hiding in small patches of forest surrounded by farmland. Inevitably they come into conflict with people. With every elephant killed by a hunter called in to protect the crops, these outlying populations inch towards extinction.



The ECF and its partners are **determined to give these elephants the best chance of survival**. Once forest elephants become extinct in these countries, it is very unlikely that they could ever return. Without elephants the remaining habitat would probably be lost, as they are a flagship for conservation. We have supported partners in ten West African countries, finding where the last elephants are hiding out, protecting their habitat, and reducing human-elephant conflict.

## Remembering Rory Young



Rory Young. © Siân Lewis/Chengeta Wildlife.

**Rory Young, the founder of Chengeta Wildlife, was a good friend and partner of the ECF. He was tragically killed while working in Burkina Faso in April 2021.**

We first got to know Rory when he was training rangers in Malawi and Guinea. He became **pivotal in the struggle to save the last desert elephants of Mali**, following the jihadist uprising. This made the Gourma elephant range one of the most dangerous places in Africa. With ECF funding, and support from the Mali Elephant Project, he and his team were able to train a mixed unit of soldiers and rangers, the only law enforcement team able to patrol the area. They faced great danger, and lost several members of the team, but persevered. Without their efforts, it is likely that few, if any, of this iconic elephant population would have survived.

Chengeta then started providing support to the Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas (APDS) Complex in southwestern Central African Republic, again partly funded by the ECF. Rory and his team helped to professionalize the rangers, including training them to the **highest standards of human rights adherence**. This is particularly important because of the presence of members of the Baka hunter gatherers and other indigenous communities in the area. As a result, when an independent review of human rights in World Wildlife Fund supported projects was carried out, Dzanga Sangha was commended. Following this successful engagement, the park management asked Chengeta to provide wider support to its law enforcement effort and regional programming.



Chengeta Wildlife training session with rangers in Dzanga Sangha Protected Area, Central African Republic. © Aaron Porter.

More recently Chengeta became involved in the WAP complex, which extends across Benin, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and holds the **largest elephant population in West Africa**. Thanks to the involvement of African Parks, the southern portion in Benin is well protected, but Arly National Park and the surrounding hunting concessions in Burkina Faso came under increasing pressure from the Islamist insurgency. The ECF provided some support in 2019, but our grantee decided that it was too dangerous, and pulled out.

The EU commissioned Chengeta to become involved in Arly and replicate its Malian model of **anti-poaching units designed to operate in a high-risk environment**. Much effort was put into understanding the environment and reducing the risks. Unfortunately, on the team's first deployment, they were attacked, and Rory and two Spanish journalists, David Beriáin and Roberto Fraile, were killed.

Rory was driven to by passion to save wildlife and to help the communities and rangers living in some of the most challenging parts of Africa. **The impact he has made will not be forgotten**. His death is a huge loss for the conservation world, but even more so for his family.



# Ivory Crisis

## Guarding against a post-COVID rebound

Over the past year, there have been some **positive developments in ivory consumption**; following a year of COVID-19 restrictions, demand for ivory in China and South Asia has been significantly suppressed. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a law enforcement crackdown on the consumptive wildlife trade in China, which in turn triggered a decline in demand. Additionally, restrictions on travel have limited the ability of Chinese consumers to access ivory outside their own country.

**OVER THE PAST YEAR, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN IVORY CONSUMPTION; FOLLOWING A YEAR OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, DEMAND FOR IVORY HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY SUPPRESSED**

Despite this, **demand for ivory may rebound once borders reopen** and Chinese tourism resumes. Traffickers are planning for a mini-boom in demand, holding onto stocks and hoping to sell when markets reopen. For now, several countries, such as Laos and Cambodia, are going into a series of new lockdowns and the borders of Vietnam remain firmly closed. Movement between China and the rest of the world is not closed but is limited and tourism is likely to remain suppressed for much of 2021.

**THERE IS A REDUCED BUT SIGNIFICANT GROUP OF COMMITTED “DIE HARD” IVORY BUYERS IN CHINA**

A recent Globescan report commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) indicates that there is a reduced but significant group of committed “die hard” ivory buyers in China, who are not deterred by the illegality of ivory or the danger of being arrested. ECF partners have also observed clusters of activity from buyers and sellers who **operate through secretive networks**.

**In Vietnam, ivory markets have continued to thrive**, with online advertising remaining active and a new market developing in Dak Lak province, where ivory is openly sold over the counter, mostly to Vietnamese buyers. A retail market feeding Vietnamese demand may be growing and this needs to be watched closely.





# Human-Elephant Coexistence

Increased investment to meet a growing need

We are witnessing a **worrying escalation of human-elephant conflict** across the African continent. The tourism income that sustains so many national parks and communities disappeared with COVID-19, but the rise in conflict may also be a result of elephants losing their fear of people as poaching has subsided in many places. While we anticipated the latter shift as our anti-poaching support matured, the near-collapse of tourism in some parks has been a major new challenge. Thanks to generous donor support, we have been able to engage in depth and at pace with our partner network to implement urgent and long-term solutions to this developing elephant crisis.

While **long term strategies for true coexistence take time**, consistent funding, and dedicated community buy-in, we are also providing immediate technical assistance to our field partners. In Botswana's Okavango Delta and Makgadikgadi Pans National Park the ECF has funded new solar fences to protect vulnerable rural farms from crop-raiding elephants, providing food security for communities reeling from tourism job losses.



A 'slash-and-burn' farm in Liberia, established close to an elephant migration route and highly vulnerable to human-elephant conflict. ECF partner Elephant Research and Conservation is working with communities in Liberia to encourage human-elephant coexistence in conflict hotspots, helping to ensure a future for a highly significant, remnant population of West Africa's forest elephants. © Elephant Research and Conservation.

## WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ENGAGE IN DEPTH AND AT PACE WITH OUR PARTNER NETWORK TO IMPLEMENT URGENT AND LONG- TERM SOLUTIONS

In Tanzania, the ECF is supporting the protection of the stunning Upper Kitete Wildlife Corridor on the edge of the Ngorongoro Crater, while creating biogas cooking systems for communities to provide alternatives to wood.



Wild Survivors is working with farmers in human-elephant conflict hotspots in the Upper Kitete corridor in Tanzania on effective mitigation measures, including beehive fences (above and below). Elephants are naturally fearful of bees and stringing beehives along fences helps keep them away from crops. © Wild Survivors.





Next to Nyerere National Park, we've been able to fund protective beehive fences and supported the implementation of a trial of a new elephant repellent that uses a strong, foul smell to keep elephants at bay. We've also funded the roll out of a large-scale chili deterrent project across 12 communities. These farmer-managed conflict mitigation strategies are being adopted in Tanzania as the **most sustainable way for communities to reduce elephant crop-raid damage** without reliance on state support.



ECF partner Southern Tanzania Elephant Program is supporting communities to produce 'smelly elephant repellent'. This is a fermented and pungent liquid mixture made using natural ingredients such as chilli, ginger, garlic, neem leaves, eggs and cow/elephant dung (above). Hung in bottles along farmland, it is proving to be a strong deterrent to elephants (below). © Southern Tanzania Elephant Program.



**Conflict with forest elephants is particularly hard to resolve** and it often comes coupled with political instability or habitat loss, generated by destructive activities such as logging, plantations, bushmeat hunting, and mining. Methods that might be effective deterrents for savanna elephants may not work in densely forested, high rainfall areas where many forest elephant populations are located.

Donor support is helping us initiate new ways to protect forest elephants from clashes with farmers. A new vehicle-equipped rapid response unit is now supporting communities and protecting the few remaining elephants living deep in the northern forests of Liberia. In the Republic of Congo, bees, chilis, lights, and non-palatable crops are being trialed as new mitigation methods on the boundary of Odzala-Kokoua National Park. We're thrilled to be entering into **new partnership within our 42<sup>nd</sup> country for the ECF, Equatorial Guinea**, where our partners will soon be testing low-cost alarms, lights, and organic repellent to reduce conflict between farmers and the elephants roaming outside of Monte Alén National Park.

These interventions show us that with the right investment, **we can find tangible solutions that allow elephants and people to coexist**. But in addition to promoting coexistence, we must also secure suitable elephant habitat both in protected areas and in the vital movement routes between them if wild elephants are to survive in modern Africa. If ever there was a time to keep investing into the conservation of the natural world, this is the time.

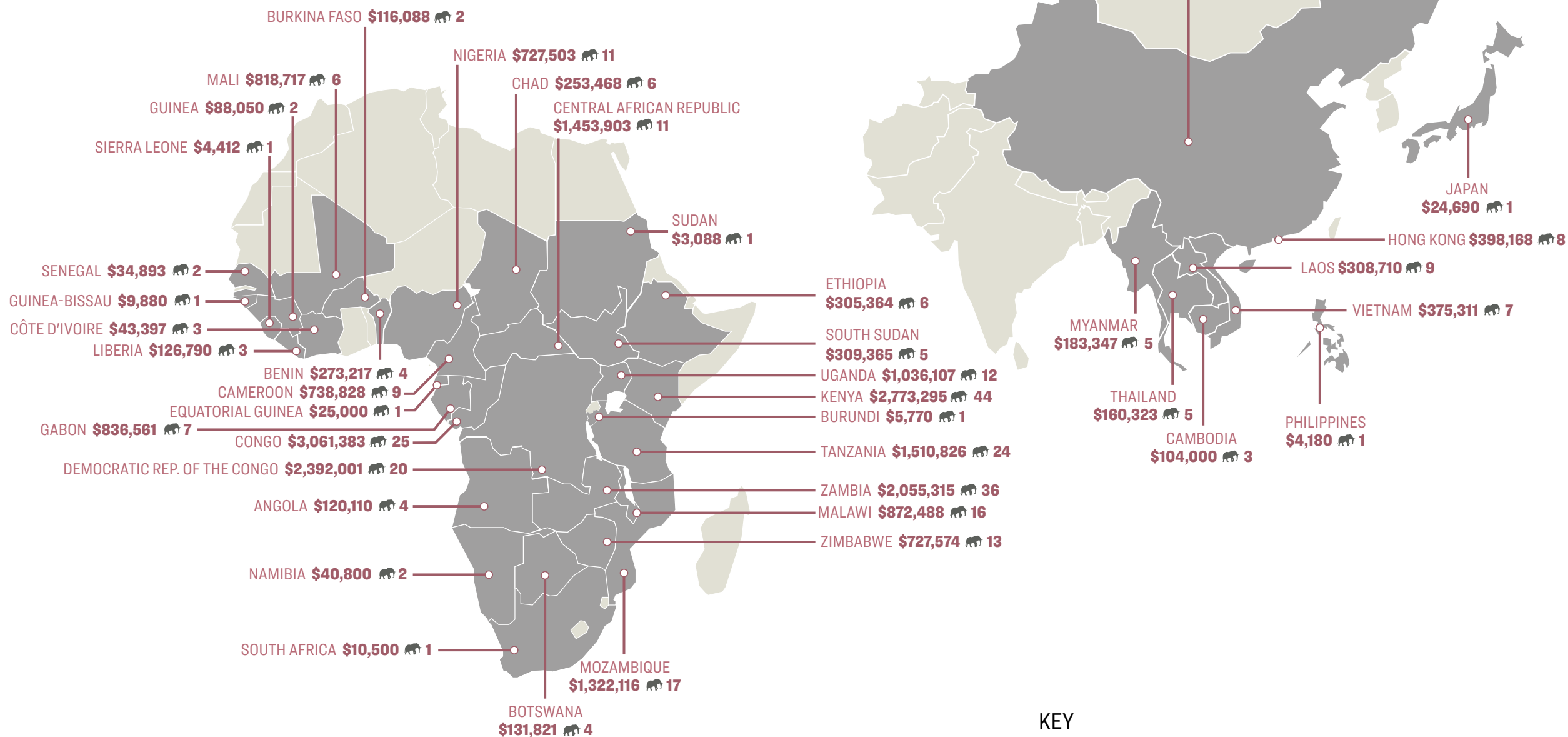


African Parks is trying out a range of innovative human-elephant conflict interventions near Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the Republic of Congo, including this strobe barrier. © African Parks.



# GLOBAL INVESTMENTS TO END THE IVORY CRISIS

## ECF GRANTS BY COUNTRY AND US\$ INVESTMENT



★ The ECF has also funded 21 anti-trafficking grants that span regional or multi-regional areas, with support totaling \$2,485,937. In addition, the ECF has funded three demand reduction grants and one anti-trafficking grant in the USA totaling \$91,649.

This map includes all grants issued since the launch of the ECF in 2013.



# Our Partners

From dense forests to open savanna, from tourist destinations to conflict zones, whether tackling the ivory trade or supporting communities to live in harmony with elephants, our partners are diverse yet cohesive. All ECF partners share common traits: they are the most effective organizations in their fields, share an absolute commitment to ensuring a future for elephants and other wildlife, and persevere despite near-overwhelming challenges. We thank them for this unswerving commitment and applaud the achievements that have been made in this period of uncertainty and change, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage.

- ADM Capital Foundation
- African Conservation Trust
- African Parks
- African Wildlife Foundation
- Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, Gabon
- Agency for Peace and Development
- Associação Moçambicana de Conservação de Fauna Bravia
- Basel Institute on Governance
- Big Life Foundation
- Biocarbon Partners
- Born Free Foundation
- Bristol Zoological Society
- Centre on Illicit Networks & Transnational Organised Crime
- Chengeta Wildlife
- Connected Conservation
- Conservation Justice
- Conservation Lake Tanganyika
- Conservation Lower Zambezi
- Conservation South Luangwa
- EAGLE Network
- East African Wildlife Society
- Ecoexist Trust
- Elephants for Africa
- Elephant Protection Initiative
- Elephant Research and Conservation
- Elephant Voices
- Elephants Alive
- Environmental Investigation Agency
- Fauna & Flora International
- Focus Africa
- Focused Conservation
- Forgotten Parks Foundation
- Frankfurt Zoological Society
- Freeland
- Game Rangers International
- Global Wildlife Conservation
- Gorongosa Restoration Project
- Instituto de Ciências, Tecnologias e Agroambiente da Universidade do Porto
- Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Kenya Wildlife Service
- Kissama Foundation
- Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia
- Liberty Shared
- Lilongwe Wildlife Trust
- Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation
- Maisha Consulting
- Mara Elephant Project
- Maravi Risk Management
- Mareja Community Conservation Project
- Natural Resource Conservation Network
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Northern Rangelands Trust
- Oxford Brookes University
- PAMS Foundation
- Panthera France
- Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources
- Save the Elephants
- Saving the Survivors
- Southern Tanzania Elephant Project
- Space for Giants
- Stichting Wings for Conservation
- Stop Ivory
- Tashinga Initiative Trust
- The WILD Foundation
- The Zambezi Society
- Tikki Hywood Foundation
- TRAFFIC
- Tsavo Trust
- Uganda Conservation Foundation
- University of Utah IsoForensics
- University of Washington
- Wild Planet Trust
- Wild Survivors
- WildAid
- Wildlife Action Group Malawi
- Wildlife Conservation Global
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Wildlife Crime Prevention
- Wildlife Justice Commission
- Wildlife Traxx Consultancy
- Wildlife Works
- WildlifeDirect
- Working Dogs for Conservation
- World Wildlife Fund
- Zoological Society of London

# Thank you

**As we look back on the achievements of the ECF since its inception in 2013, and ahead as the future for elephants unfolds, we cannot overstate the importance of our donors.**

You are an integral part of the ECF team and we take strength from your commitment and support on this incredible journey. Thank you for all that you do and for walking this road with Africa's elephants.

Thank you to our dedicated major supporters, #knotonmyplanet and Tiffany & Co, and to our many loyal and valued private contributors.





  
SAVE THE ELEPHANTS



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WCN

Wildlife Conservation Network

[elephantcrisisfund.org](http://elephantcrisisfund.org)