

KENYA | ZAMBIA | TANZANIA | CHINA



# The Ivory Game



## Protected Areas & Project Sites

N/A

## Donor

[Vulcan, Inc.](#)

and Vulcan Productions

## Dates

Start: Feature documentary film produced 2015–2016;  
Film released internationally on Netflix November 4, 2016

End: Impact screenings and events 2017–ongoing

## Project Status

Active

## Donor Funding Amount

Total Amount (US\$): Confidential  
IWT Percentage: 100%

## Primary IWT Intervention Type

Communication & awareness

*The Ivory Game* is a feature documentary film project designed to increase awareness of the current elephant crisis and support other policy and philanthropic initiatives related to elephant conservation. Project activities include producing the feature documentary film and presenting impact screenings and events. The project activities resulted in: the poaching issue reaching a wide, non-traditional audience, reaching audiences across China, and targeted audiences along the ivory trafficking route from East Africa through Vietnam to China. Challenges included overcoming logistical difficulties to screen the film in villages surrounding National Parks across Africa. Lessons learned included: the importance of engaging local partners to aid with impact screening logistics in Africa; gaining state acceptance of activities in China opened doors to further activities in the country; and engaging key documentary film characters significantly helped promotion efforts.

## Project Objective

1. Increase awareness of the current elephant crisis with: (a) people involved with various aspects of ivory trade; and (b) audiences positioned to make the most impact, such as policy makers and influential conservation organizations.
2. Support other Vulcan policy and philanthropic initiatives related to elephant conservation.

## Activities and Executing Partners

### COMPONENTS

**Component 1: Produce feature documentary film.** *The Ivory Game*, follows conservationists and activists, including members of the Tanzanian National and Transnational Serious Crimes Investigation Unit (NTSCIU), undercover Chinese activists, and frontline rangers as they take on the fight to bring down poachers, traffickers, and corrupt government officials involved in ivory trafficking.



Photo: [Netflix](#)

**Component 2: Present impact screenings and events.** By celebrating local heroes as shown in the film, impact screenings and events connected with targeted audiences in a positive way and opened the door to increased reach throughout East Africa and China.

#### **KEY EXECUTING PARTNERS INVOLVED**

- Netflix was the global distributor to 103+ million subscribers with subtitles in over 50 languages
- U.S. State Department was the screening host in key locations, including: China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, and Gabon

## Donor Coordination

**All donors that co-financed this project or related investments:**

N/A

**Key project benefits resulting from donor coordination and areas for improvement:**

N/A

## Results

#### **KEY OUTCOMES**

**Poaching issue reached a wide, non-traditional audience.** High profile film accolades, including Executive Producer Leonardo Di Caprio and Shortlist for Best Feature Documentary Oscar, brought broad awareness to the poaching issue outside traditional conservation audiences.

**Reached audiences across China.** Receiving the Best International Documentary Award at the Beijing International Film Festival opened doors to reaching audiences across China and Hong Kong.

**Targeted audiences along the ivory trafficking route.** 42 impact screenings in communities around the world targeted audiences along the ivory trafficking route, from East Africa through Vietnam to China.

#### **KEY CHALLENGES**

One initial idea was to screen the film in small villages surrounding National Parks across Africa. This strategy ran into language barriers and logistical difficulties. Later Vulcan relied on partners such as the Zanzibar International Film Festival, whose Community Outreach program took the film to 32 villages across Northern Tanzania.

# Lessons Learned

## Top three lessons learned:

1. **Engage local partners to aid with impact screening logistics in Africa.** In Africa, local partners were key to screening logistics and provided an opportunity to highlight local leadership in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts.
2. **Gain state acceptance of activities in China.** Acceptance by state-run Beijing International Film Festival opened doors to further opportunities in China.
3. **Engage key documentary film characters in promotion efforts.** Chinese activist featured in the film became local hero and was key to engaging and inspiring Chinese audiences and media coverage.

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES & OTHER INFORMATION

### Awards:

Academy Awards: Shortlisted for Best Feature Documentary Oscar 2017

“Game Changer” Award at the TUSK Annual Gala Event, award presented by Jane Goodall

WWF 2016 Golden Panda Award Winner

HSUS Genesis Award Winner: Outstanding Documentary Film

Cinema for Peace, Berlin International: Green Award Winner

Beijing International Film Festival, Best International Feature Documentary

Grand Teton Award, Jackson Hole Film Festival

2017 WEBBY Award Nomination in Digital Category, [www.theivorygame.com](http://www.theivorygame.com)

### Websites:

The Ivory Game: <https://theivorygame.com/>

### Videos:

The Ivory Game, Official Trailer, Netflix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GPEKKaSmZY>

**Media:**

Deadline: [‘The Ivory Game’ Wins: Ivory Trade Banned in China Following Netflix Doc’s November Release](#)

The New York Times: [Review: ‘The Ivory Game Follows the Fight to Protect Elephants](#)

Variety: [Film Review: ‘The Ivory Game’](#)

National Geographic: [Netflix’ ‘The Ivory Game’ Goes Undercover into Poaching Crisis](#)

Esquire: [This is the most important issue that’s not being talked about in this election](#)

Men’s Journal: [‘The Ivory Game’ Directors Celebrate China’s Ivory Ban](#)

The Guardian: [The Ivory Game review - timely account of elephants’ death throes](#)

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The Global Wildlife Program is a global partnership on wildlife conservation and crime prevention for sustainable development. To learn more, visit the [Global Wildlife Program webpage](#) or contact them at [gwp-info@worldbank.org](mailto:gwp-info@worldbank.org).